



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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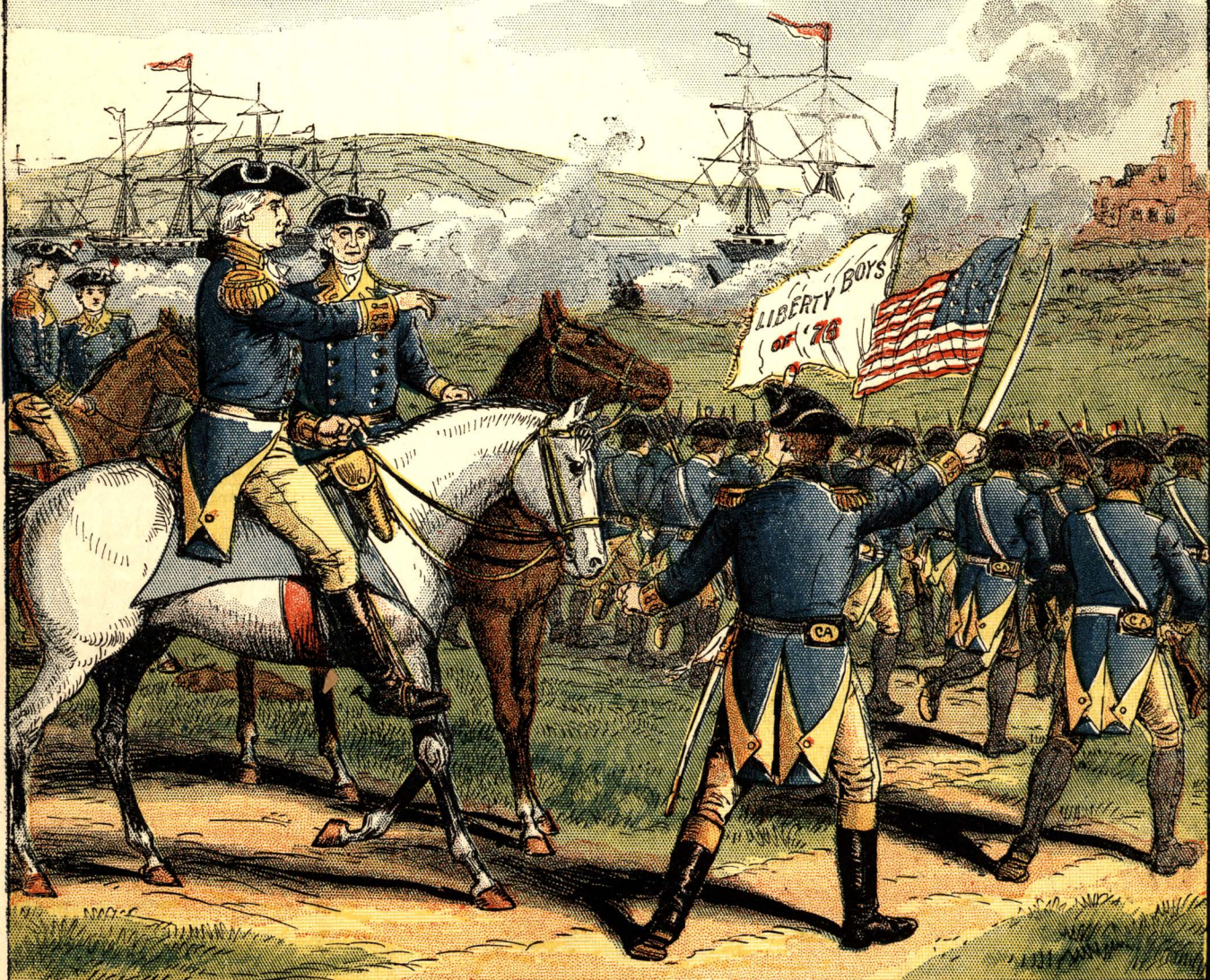
No. 133.

NEW YORK, JULY 17, 1903.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' BAYONET CHARGE! OR, THE SIEGE OF YORKTOWN.

By HARRY MOORE.



"We are out of ammunition, your excellency," said Dick. "Then charge on the redoubt," said General Washington, grimly. "Charge bayonets!" cried Dick. The "Liberty Boy's" dashed forward, with a cheer.

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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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CHAPTER I.

THE MESSENGER FROM THE NORTH.

Late in the afternoon of a beautiful day in the latter part of August of the year 1781 a handsome youth, mounted upon a magnificent coal-black horse, rode into the city of Richmond, in the State of Virginia.

This young man galloped through the suburbs, and down along the main street of the city and, pausing, finally, asked of a man who was standing on the pavement, the location of the patriot headquarters.

"You mean the quarters occupied by General Lafayette?" the citizen asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

The man pointed down the street.

"Do you see that large house, yonder, in the next block?" he asked.

"I do."

"That is the Patriot headquarters."

"Thank you," and the young man rode on.

A minute later he had dismounted and tied his horse, and then he ran up onto the stoop and sounded the knocker on the front door.

The door was opened by a negro as black as coal.

"I wish to see General Lafayette," said the young man.

"Who is yo', sah?" the servant asked.

"My name is Dick Slater."

"Whar is yo' from, sah?"

"The North."

"All raght, sah; come in, sah, an' Ah'll go an' tell de gin'ral yo' is heah, sah."

The youth entered and took a seat on a chair standing in the hall.

The negro made his way back along the hall, to where a stairway led upstairs. He made his way up the stairs and was gone perhaps five minutes; then he returned with the announcement:

"De gin'ral will see yo', sah; come along uv me, sah."

The young man arose and followed the negro upstairs and to the door of a room overlooking the street.

The negro pushed the door open and said, "Dick Slatah, sah," and stepped aside, the youth passing into the room.

The negro pulled the door shut and went back downstairs.

As the youth entered a young man of seemingly not much greater age than Dick Slater himself rose and advanced quickly, his hand extended.

This man was General Lafayette, the young Frenchman who assisted the Americans so greatly in their struggle for Liberty.

"Captain Dick Slater, I am glad to see you," said General Lafayette.

"Thank you; the feeling is reciprocated, I assure you," replied Dick Slater, as he grabbed the outstretched hand and shook it warmly.

"I have heard a great deal about you and about your brave 'Liberty Boys,' Captain Slater."

"And I have heard a great deal about the noble-hearted young Frenchman, Lafayette, who has done so much to help the Americans in their fight for freedom," said Dick, not to be outdone in politeness.

"Ah that which I have done is not very much," was the deprecating reply.

"The American people think differently, General Lafayette."

"Well, I am glad of that, Captain Slater; I am glad to have been of assistance to the great cause of liberty; I hope to see the same cause triumphant in my own country some day."

"Well, if it becomes necessary to fight for liberty over there you will have had enough experience on this side of the ocean to make you a valuable man for the work, General Lafayette."

"True, true; but how comes it that you are here, Captain Slater; what brings you into the South?"

"I have news for you, sir."

"Ah, indeed?"

"Yes."

"And of what does the news consist?"

"I have come down here to tell you that Generals Washington and Rochambeau with the patriot army of the North, are coming South to co-operate with you."

"Ah! They are going to attempt to capture Cornwallis?"

"Yes."

Lafayette looked grave.

"We might be successful in that," he said slowly; "were it not that the British fleet may appear at any moment and render Cornwallis such assistance as to make it impossible that we should bring about his surrender; at the last moment if we were to outfight him, he could go aboard the British fleet and escape us by water."

The Liberty Boy shook his head.

"No, he could not do that," he said.

The general looked surprised.

"Why could he not?" he asked.

The Liberty Boy smiled.

"For the reason that the French fleet would not permit it," he replied.

General Lafayette started and uttered an exclamation.

"The French fleet?" he cried.

"Yes."

"What French fleet?"

"That of Count de Grasse, from the West Indies."

General Lafayette looked eager and excited.

"Do you mean to tell me, Captain Slater, that Count de Grasse's fleet really is coming into the Chesapeake to help in bringing about the capture of Cornwallis and his army?"

The youth nodded.

"Yes, I mean to say that very thing," he said.

Lafayette was greatly excited; he was delighted as well.

"That will be grand!" he cried; "that will be superb! And you say that Washington and Rochambeau and a large army is coming South to help bring about the capture of Cornwallis?"

"Yes; they were as far as Philadelphia when I left them, and they are probably getting ready to embark on the transports at the head of the Chesapeake by this time."

"This is glorious news!" cried Lafayette.

"Yes," agreed Dick; "it begins to look as though Cornwallis would be forced to surrender ultimately."

"Yes, if the French fleet reaches here it will be able to hold the British fleet at bay and keep it from assisting Cornwallis, and the result can hardly be otherwise than that we will win against Cornwallis."

"Here is a message that General Washington told me to deliver to you, General Lafayette."

As he spoke Dick drew a document from his pocket and handed it to the young Frenchman.

"Excuse me while I read this, Captain Slater."

"Certainly."

Lafayette opened the letter and read the contents with great interest.

"It is well," he said when he had finished, "General Washington instructs me to move from here to Williamsburg and take up my position across the neck of the peninsula on which Cornwallis has established his army."

"That is what I supposed was in the letter."

"Yes, but I have only five thousand troops and half their number, at least, are militia, and I fear that I shall be unable to keep Cornwallis from coming back off the peninsula if he takes it into his head to do so."

"Well, you can cause him a good deal of trouble and delay him to such an extent as to give the patriot army of the North and the French fleet time to get here."

"True; I can do something. Then, too, as Cornwallis will have no knowledge of the coming of the patriot army or the French fleet, it is possible that he will pay no attention to me, even after I have taken up my position on the neck of the peninsula at Williamsburg."

"That is possible, even probable."

"So I think; he will not consider that he is in any danger, for he will think that if worse should come to worst the British fleet could come and take his army away by water."

"You are right, General Lafayette; I think you will experience no difficulty in holding the British from trying to get off the peninsula."

"Well, I shall obey orders at any rate, come what may; I will give orders that the army get ready to leave Richmond early in the morning."

Then Lafayette asked Dick many questions. He was eager to know just what to expect, and Dick was enabled to give him the information.

"And so you came on ahead, alone?" exclaimed Lafayette, presently. "It must have been a lonesome journey."

"Oh, I am used to traveling long distances alone," said Dick.

"And your Liberty Boys—where are they?"

"They are coming."

"With Washington?"

"No; they are coming on horseback while Washington and the army are coming on transports."

"Ah, yes; I understand. You rode faster than your Liberty Boys."

"Yes; there was no need that they should injure their horses trying to keep up with me, and that reminds me of my horse, General Lafayette. He is a thoroughbred, a noble animal, and I would be very glad if you would send

man to look after him. He needs a rub-down and some feed."

The general rang a bell and the black man soon appeared.

"There is a horse hitched in front of this house, Ephraim," said the general.

"Yes, sah; I done seed 'im, sah."

"Very good; send a man to look after the horse. The animal has been ridden far and hard; have him taken to the stable and rubbed down and fed."

"Yes, sah; Ah'll 'tend to hit, sah."

Then Ephraim went away to do the work he was told to do.

After some further conversation Dick said:

"Well, I must go now and look up lodgings for the night."

"You will do nothing of the sort," said General Lafayette, decidedly; "there is plenty of room here at headquarters, and you will remain and be my guest."

"Very well, since you wish it," said Dick.

"I do wish it; there is much that I wish to ask you about and we can talk while at supper and afterward. I shall have the members of my staff here after supper and they may wish to hear what you have to say."

They talked till supper was ready and then went to the dining room and ate heartily. Dick, especially, did full justice to the meal, for he had been on the road three or four days and had not had very much to eat.

After supper the members of the staff, having been notified to call at headquarters, put in an appearance. They were greatly surprised when they were introduced to Dick Slater, and were told that the patriot army of the North, under Generals Washington and Rochambeau, was coming South to attempt to capture Cornwallis, and that the French fleet was coming from the West Indies to assist in the affair.

"That is splendid news," said one, enthusiastically; "we shall certainly succeed in capturing the British on the peninsula."

"We may do so if everything works as favorably as we hope may be the case," said Lafayette, who knew there was no certainty of this.

CHAPTER II.

DICK MEETS SOME YOUNG PEOPLE.

"Well, here we are, Captain Slater."

"Yes, we are occupying the vantage ground. If we can hold it we will be all right."

"True. Well, we will hold it if such a thing is possible." Two days had elapsed.

The patriot force under Lafayette had marched from Richmond and had now just gone into camp at Williamsburg, which place was about eight miles from Yorktown, where Cornwallis and the British army was located.

General Lafayette and Dick were looking out of the window of the house in which the general had taken up his quarters, and were watching the soldiers, who were busily engaged in cooking their suppers. The house the general had selected as headquarters was the home of a patriot, who made the officer welcome, and a few minutes later the host came in and announced that supper was ready.

They went into the dining room and ate supper, and then returned to the sitting room.

They took seats and entered into a discussion regarding the situation. Presently Dick suggested that he be allowed to make himself useful while awaiting the coming of his Liberty Boys.

"I am quite willing that you should do so, if you like," said Lafayette, "but what do you wish to do?"

"I would like to go on a reconnoitering expedition."

"Ah, you wish to size up the British and see what they are doing, eh?"

"Yes."

"I intend sending out some scouts, Captain Slater, so it will not be necessary for you to do any of the work if you do not wish to."

"But I do wish it; I like to be at work, General Lafayette."

"Very good; you are at liberty to do as you like, Captain Slater. Indeed, I do not feel that I have any authority over you at all. You came to me simply as a messenger and have a perfect right to go and come as you please, to do as you please."

"I don't look at it that way," said Dick. "I am under the superior officer, no matter where I may be, and I would not think of doing anything without first asking permission. There can be no success in war without discipline."

"True enough, but this is a special and exceptional case. I shall insist that you feel free to do just as you like."

"Very well, and thank you," said Dick. "I shall go at once and reconnoiter the British."

"Be careful, Captain Slater."

"I shall exercise every care. How far is it to Yorktown?"

"I really do not know, but would guess that it is about ten miles."

"Then I will ride."

"Oh, yes; it would be too far to walk."

"If I am not back before morning do not be uneasy," said Dick; "I may be gone a day or two."

"I understand; you wish to make a thorough examination of the British position before returning."

"That is it exactly."

"Very good, I shall look for you only when I see you coming."

"That will be best."

Then Dick shook hands with the general, bade him goodbye and took his departure.

He went around to the stable at the rear of the house and, entering, bridled and saddled Major with his own hands.

Then he led the noble horse out, mounted and rode away toward the east.

It was just coming on dark, and although Dick had never been in this part of the country before and did not know the lay of the land, he had no fears that he would be unable to find his way all right. In war times everybody in any given vicinity knows the location of the army if it is within a reasonable distance, and all that would be necessary was that he should stop at an occasional house and ask his way.

There was a sort of road leading from Williamsburg to Yorktown, and Dick thought that Major might be able to follow the road, even in the dark, and so, as soon as it became so dark he could not see, he let the horse have his head and pick his own way.

The Liberty Boy had done this many a time and nearly always with good results.

He rode onward at a fair pace for an hour, and then brought his horse to a stop in front of a house standing a short distance back from the road. There were lights in the house and the sound of voices in talk and laughter came to Dick's hearing.

"Must be some visitors here," thought Dick. "Well, I will stop and make a few inquiries, anyway. I should think that I might learn what I wish to know without arousing the suspicions of the people here."

He leaped down and tied Major to the fence. Then he walked to the house and knocked on the door. It was opened by a big fat negress, who courtesied and said:

"Come raght in, sah; come raght in."

But Dick shook his head.

"No, I won't come in," he said. "I wish to see the gentleman of the house a few moments."

"Oh, hain't yo' wun ob de young mens whut is goin' to dance to-naght, sah?"

"So you are going to have a dance here to-night?" remarked Dick.

"Yes, sah; an' Ah done t'ought dat yo' wuz wun ob de guests, sah."

"No, I am a traveler and wished to ask your master a few questions."

"What is it, Dinah?" asked a masculine voice at this moment.

"Heah's a young trabbler, sah, whut wants to ax yo' a few questions, sah," replied the negress.

"Very well, you may go."

The negress courtesied and waddled away along the hall and a gray-haired, good-looking man appeared before the youth.

"You wished to ask me some questions?" the man inquired, eyeing Dick searchingly.

"Yes, sir; I wished to ask if I am on the right road to Yorktown."

"Which way are you going?"

"Toward the east."

"Then you are on the right road."

"How far is it to Yorktown?"

"One mile and a half."

"Thank you, sir."

The Liberty Boy bowed and turned away and the man stepped out of doors and, closing the door behind him, said:

"One moment, my young friend."

Dick paused.

"What is it, sir?" he asked.

"You have asked me some questions, now permit me to ask you one or two."

"I have no objections, sir."

"Very good; will you answer them?"

"That depends."

"On what the questions are, eh?"

"Yes."

"What I wish to ask is this: Are you a patriot?"

The Liberty Boy was silent for a few moments. He was thinking swiftly. Somehow he had a suspicion that this man was a patriot; to Dick's way of thinking, he looked like a patriot. Dick believed that he could, in the majority of instances, tell whether a man was a tory or a patriot simply by looking at him. He often claimed to his Liberty Boys that the patriots had a more friendly, benevolent, kindly look than was the case with the tories. He was minded to tell the man the truth, but he felt that it was necessary that he should be cautious, and so he replied, Yankee fashion, by asking a question:

"Why do you wish to know?"

"Well, I'll tell you," was the reply; "I am a patriot, and there is something about your appearance that led me to believe you are a patriot also, and if such is the case I would be pleased to know it."

"Well, then," said Dick; "I will admit that I am a patriot."

"I was sure of it!" in a pleasant voice; "and now may I ask your name?"

Again Dick hesitated an instant and then he said:

"My name is Dick Slater."

"I have heard of you," the man said; "shake hands. I am proud to know you. My name is Campbell—William Campbell."

The two shook hands heartily, and then Mr. Campbell said:

"You were asking the way and the distance to Yorktown, Mr. Slater; you were going there to spy on the British?"

"Yes, sir; I wish to reconnoiter the British position."

"Where did you come from?"

"Williamsburg."

"On horseback?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, let me make a suggestion: Leave your horse here and go to Yorktown afoot."

"That is a good suggestion, Mr. Campbell, and I shall be glad to act upon it."

"Very good."

"It will be much safer for me to venture near the British encampment afoot than on horseback."

"So I thought."

"Yes; my horse is tied to the fence. Will you have him taken to the stable?"

"I will; I will send one of the negro men to take care of your horse, and now, Mr. Slater, I wish to invite you to stay here two or three hours and mingle with the young people. We are going to have a dance, and there are some young folks in the house now and more will be along soon. It will not be a good plan for you to venture to Yorktown early in the evening, anyway."

"True, sir; I would prefer to wait a couple of hours, at least, and will accept your kind invitation. By the way, however, perhaps it will be as well that no one, save yourself, should know who I really am, for there may be some tory young men present at the dance, and it might interfere with my plans if they knew I was Dick Slater. They might send word to the British and make it difficult for me to do any successful spywork."

"That is true and well thought of. I will introduce you under a fictitious name—say Henry Morton."

"That will do nicely," said Dick.

"Very well; come on in and I will introduce you to the guests already present and then send a man to take care of your horse."

"Thank you, Mr. Campbell."

They entered the house and went into the big sitting room, where nearly a dozen young people of both sexes were gathered. Mr. Campbell introduced Dick as "Mr. Henry Morton," and then went out to order a colored man to take Dick's horse to the stable.

As Dick was a handsome, manly-looking youth, he was given a warm welcome by the young people, especially so by the girls, for it was only natural they should look upon a handsome young man with favor.

The Liberty Boy was soon on friendly social terms with all the young folks and enjoyed himself very well, indeed, talking and laughing with the boys and girls.

CHAPTER III.

SURPRISING THE REDCOATS.

Among the young people was the host's daughter, Lizzie Campbell, a beautiful, jolly girl of perhaps sixteen years.

She seemed to take a liking to Dick and engaged him in conversation, and was so lively and jolly that Dick was greatly pleased and splendidly entertained.

Mr. Campbell had explained to the young people that Dick was on his way to Yorktown, but that he had decided to stop awhile on learning that there was to be a dance there.

"You must stay clear through to the finish, Mr. Morton," said Lizzie; "it will not be fair to us to leave just when we begin to enjoy your company."

"Oh, you will have enough of my company by the time I have been here two or three hours," laughed Dick.

"No, no; not a bit of it," was the reply, "and if you do go away we girls shall feel very bad, I assure you."

"Speak for yourself, Lizzie," said a rather cynical-looking, but pretty, black-eyed girl.

"I am speaking for myself," with a laugh and a bewitching glance at Dick; "and I think I am speaking for the rest of you girls at the same time."

"I am afraid Mr. Morton will have to fight some duels before this night is ended if you keep on talking like that, Miss Lizzie," said a handsome young fellow by the name of Tom Ferroll.

"I hope not," smiled Dick; "I have no intention of trying to make wall flowers of you young gentlemen, I assure you, and I could not do it even if I would, for you are about as fine looking a lot of young men as I have ever been thrown among."

"Ah, ha; you hear that, Lizzie?" cried Ferroll, swelling out his chest; "Mr. Morton says I am a fine-looking fellow."

"Oh, men are not good judges of manly beauty," laughed Lizzie; "I would not like to let one select a sweetheart for me."

"No, I see you prefer to do that yourself," laughed Ferroll, and as all set up a laugh at Lizzie's expense, she blushed and, taking a step forward slapped Ferroll lightly on the cheek.

"Take that for your impudence," she said.

"I guess I didn't make you very angry, Lizzie," the young man said; "that is, if the blow you gave me is any indication of the state of your feelings, for it was not hard enough to hurt a flea."

Some more young people put in an appearance at this moment and attention was attracted to them.

Lizzie Campbell introduced Dick to the newcomers and then the conversation went on and the laughter was good to hear. It was a lively, jolly crowd, and Dick was glad that he had decided to stay awhile; it would be a treat to him after weeks and months of camp life with scarcely any amusement at all.

The young men were pretty sensible fellows, and did not seem to be made angry or jealous because the girls seemed to like the companionship of the young stranger. They liked the youth themselves; there was something so frank and open in his face and actions that they could not help liking him. He made them feel toward him much the way that a brother feels—or should feel—toward a brother.

And of course the girls liked him. That is to say, with perhaps one exception; this was the black-eyed girl who had spoken so cynically earlier in the evening in talking to Lizzie. She seemed not to like Dick, though it may have been assumed, for who can tell by a girl's actions just what her thoughts and feelings are?

Soon more young people came in, and within an hour of the time Dick arrived at the Campbell home there were at least two dozen boys and girls present.

Then an old negro entered the room, carrying in his hands an old violin, and he took his place in one corner and started up a lively air.

"Take your places for a quadrille," called out a young man who had been appointed to act as floor manager for the evening.

"Will you favor me?" Dick asked Lizzie Campbell, and she smiled, bowed and said:

"With pleasure, Mr. Morton."

Soon two sets were made up, and then the dancing began. Dick was a good dancer and so was Lizzie, and they were the most noticed couple on the floor.

When the quadrille was ended Dick led Lizzie to a seat and thanked her for the pleasure the dancing had afforded him.

"I enjoyed it fully as much as you did, I am sure, Mr. Morton," was the smiling reply.

The Liberty Boy was on the floor nearly every dance. He waltzed and schottisched, he danced the polka and the square dances, and had a splendid time.

One, two hours passed, and it seemed to him as though he had been there scarcely any time at all.

"You have got to stay clear through to the end of the dancing," said Lizzie.

"Oh, I can't do that," said Dick; "I will really have to go before very much longer."

We are going to have supper in about an hour; you shall not go until after that, anyway, Mr. Morton."

"Well, as I am a great fellow to eat, I suppose I shall have to stay and take supper," said Dick.

"Thank you; I am glad you have promised to stay."

"The pleasure is all mine," said Dick.

This speech pleased the girl, and she flushed slightly and her eyes sparkled with pleasure.

Half an hour later the dancing stopped and a couple of long tables were brought into the big room and table-cloths were spread over them. Then a couple of negro women proceeded to place the banquet on the table, Mrs. Campbell superintending the work.

There was food fit for anyone and oceans of it. Dick was glad he had stopped, for the hard camp fare that he had been accustomed to most of the time for several years past made him in a position to enjoy a feast of this kind. Probably there was no person present who suspected what a treat the banquet would be to the young stranger.

The work of setting the table and getting everything in readiness had just been finished when there came a knock at the door. Dinah, the colored woman who had admitted Dick, went to the door, and when she opened it she gave utterance to a startled exclamation.

"Foh de laws sakes!" she cried; "uf heah hain't de whole Britisher army!"

"Out of the way, old woman!" cried an arrogant, commanding voice, and then into the room strode a British soldier wearing the uniform of a captain. Behind him came five common soldiers, and their eyes fairly glowed as their owners noted the banquet.

The young men stood still and stared at the newcomers in amazement, and with anything but a pleasant look on their faces, while as for the girls it was evident that they

were frightened, for they cowered back against the walls and their faces were pale.

Dick was perhaps the coolest person in the room, aside from the redecoats; he stood at one side and was not under the eyes of the soldiers, for which he was glad, as he anticipated trouble, and wished to be in a position to take the intruders by surprise.

Mr. Campbell had been in another room, and he hastened to enter as soon as he heard the strange voice. He paused and stared at the British soldiers in amazement and with considerable displeasure, though he tried to mask this as much as possible.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said; "but what can I do for you?"

"You can just let us alone," was the arrogant reply from the captain; "don't bother us and we won't bother you. We have simply dropped in to eat this splendid banquet you have prepared for us, that is all, and as soon as we have finished you may remove the tables and go on with your dancing."

This was cool, to say the least, and Mr. Campbell was taken aback. He was far from being cowardly however and so he said, in as firm a voice as he could muster:

"But this banquet was prepared for these young ladies and gentlemen here, and not for you. I trust you will appreciate the situation and not intrude yourselves where you have not been invited."

"Oh, we don't want any invitations," was the sneering reply; "we have invited ourselves, and are going to eat our fill. The man or boy who attempts to interfere with us does so at his peril!"

He tapped the butt of a pistol as he spoke and then to his comrades he added:

"Sit down, boys, and get to work. This is a fine banquet, and I am eager to sample it."

The five troopers laughed in a boisterous, sneering manner and seated themselves at the table, the captain doing the same.

Dick Slater had watched the scene with his blood fairly boiling with anger.

"I think those fellows beat anybody that I have ever met for insolence," he told himself. "Well, I am not going to stand here and watch them eat up the banquet intended for these young ladies and gentlemen. I was figuring on enjoying the banquet myself, and I am not going to give up the idea without a struggle."

Dick did not have a musket with him, of course, as it was too unhandy when he was spying or reconnoitering but he had four pistols in his belt **under** his coat and long-bladed knife. He had kept **his** coat buttoned, so the fact that he was a walking arsenal had not been discovered by the young folks he had been dancing with all the evening.

There were six of the redecoats, all armed, true; but Dick believed that if he were to get them covered with a couple of pistols before they realized that they were in any danger he would be able to cow them, and then the dozen young

men could be counted upon to be more than a match, physically, for the six redcoats.

Then Dick thought of getting one of the young men to help him. He had been greatly impressed by Tom Ferroll, who was without doubt a bright young fellow, and Dick had no doubt he was a brave youth as well. It happened that Tom was standing right beside Dick, who turned to him and said in a whisper:

"Are you willing to stand here and see those scoundrels eat the supper that was intended for the young ladies and you young men?"

"I'm not willing," was the whispered reply, "but I don't see how we are to help ourselves."

"It can be helped, if you are willing to assist me, Tom."

"I'm willing, but what can we do?"

"We can make them get out of here."

"How?" eagerly.

Dick unbuttoned his coat and, drawing two pistols from his belt—Tom staring in amazement the while—he handed them to the young man. The redcoats had their attention on Mr. Campbell and on the banquet spread before them and saw nothing of this side-play.

Then Dick drew the other two pistols from his belt.

"We will step around to the head of the table and level the pistols at the redcoats," whispered Dick; "put on a bold front, Tom, and have no fear. Leave everything to me and we will put those fellows to flight. They will get out of here quicker than they came in."

"All right; I'll do just as you say, and if you say 'shoot' I'll shoot, too, you can wager on it!"

"That's the way to talk," approvingly; "now come along."

The youths had cautiously cocked the pistols, pulling back on the triggers as they did so to keep them from making the clicking noise, and the next moment they stepped to the head of the table and leveled the weapons, this taking place just as the six redcoats took seats at the table. The move was thus not taken note of by the British troops, owing to the fact that they were busy with their own movements. Then, too, of course, they did not for one moment imagine that any of the youths would dare offer to resist them or object to anything they did.

The instant they were in position Dick called out, in a firm, clear voice:

"Get up from the table! What do you mean by taking your seats before the ladies have had a chance at the food?"

The six redcoats turned their heads quickly. Their faces were pictures of amazement and consternation as their owners gazed into the muzzles of the four pistols.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ANGRY OFFICER.

The affair had come as a surprise to the redcoats. They had not supposed that the youths would dare lift

a hand against them. Their idea was that the very sight of the British uniforms would give the youths such a scare that they would not dare so much as open their mouths.

Now they saw their mistake, when it was too late.

The trouble was that they had had no knowledge of the fact that among the party was a veteran youthful patriot soldier. Had they known this they might have been a bit more careful.

"Drop those pistols!" cried the captain, glaring at Dick and Tom fiercely.

He imagined that he might even yet frighten them into doing what he told them to do.

But Dick Slater merely smiled in a scornful manner.

"You don't suppose that we will obey you, do you?" he asked, calmly.

"You had better."

"Why so?" This with the utmost coolness. Indeed so cool and calm was Dick that all the young people, and Mr. and Mrs. Campbell as well, to say nothing of the redcoats, were amazed. They had not expected that the young stranger would turn out to be a hero, yet he was defying the six British soldiers and seemingly not a bit frightened by the odds against himself and friend, Tom Ferroll. Tom, too, was a surprise to his friends; they had not expected that he would prove to be so brave in time of danger.

"If you don't put those pistols away myself and comrades will be the death of you!" the leader of the redcoats declared, as fiercely as possible.

"We are not at all alarmed, are we, Tom?" remarked Dick.

"To tell the truth, I'm not a bit scared," said Tom Ferroll, coolly; "and to add some more truth to that statement, I will say that ten minutes ago I would have thought that under such circumstances I would be frightened half to death."

"Which proves that many persons are heroes without being aware of the fact," said Dick.

"Fools, not heroes," sneered the captain.

"So you think we are fools, do you?" asked Dick.

"I am sure of it."

"Well, I think differently. We would be fools if we were to stand here and watch you fellows eat the supper intended for the young people present—but that we do not intend to do. We intend that the people for whom the banquet was intended shall eat it, so you fellows get up from the table and take your places over in the corner of the room, yonder."

The redcoats hesitated, glaring at Dick and Tom the while, but they finally decided that the youths meant what they said and that they would shoot, if necessary, and so they got up slowly and reluctantly and walked over to the corner indicated and took up their position there.

"Now one of you boys relieve the gentlemen of their weapons," ordered Dick. "We will pull the wolves' teeth and then they will be unable to do damage."

Two of the youths stepped forward and unbuckled the belts from around the redcoats' waists and took them around to where Dick and Tom stood.

"Now take the pistols out of the belts and place one in front of each of the plates on this side of the table," said Dick. "Be sure to point the muzzles down the length of the table, so they won't point toward the girls and frighten them."

The youths hastened to obey the order. They began to understand what Dick intended to do and were very well pleased. In the six belts were twelve pistols, and these were placed along on the table, one being in front of each plate on the side the youths were to sit on.

The British soldiers evidently understood what was intended, too, for their faces were black with rage, and they glared at Dick as though it would give them great pleasure to murder him. The youth understood this and met their looks of hatred with the blandest of smiles. Dick Slater was not the youth to be frightened by black looks.

"Now, young ladies," said Dick, bowing in the direction of the girls who were standing at one end of the room looking frightened, "step this way and be seated at the table. We will now proceed with the banquet which these redcoated chaps interrupted." He motioned toward the row of chairs on the side next to where the redcoats stood as he spoke.

But the girls held back and looked even more frightened. Seeing this Dick said, reassuringly:

"Have no fears, girls; the gentlemen will not bother us. We have pulled their teeth, so to speak. Come right along and sit down. You will note that your backs are toward the gentlemen, while we boys will sit facing them. Well, you see the pistols in front of the plates? If the owners of said pistols attempt to bother us in any way while the banquet is in progress we will take up their pistols and shoot them down with their own bullets."

"Yes, yes! Come along, girls!" cried several of the youths, who were now beginning to enjoy the discomfiture of the intruders.

"I'll settle with you, young man!" said the leader of the party of redcoats. "I shall make it my business to put an end to your career."

"You will find it unremunerative business," said Dick, "and then there is the chance that you yourself may have an end put to your career."

"I have no fears on that score," growlingly.

The girls were evidently pretty thoroughly frightened, but they did as told, and seated themselves at the table. Then the youths seated themselves at the other side, and facing the girls and the redcoats as well.

"Now everybody pitch in," said Dick, who had constituted himself master of ceremonies. "Don't be at all backward, but go right ahead just as though those six intruders were not present. They dare not attempt to create a disturbance, for if they should do so they would get the worst of it very speedily."

The young folks started in and ate with a relish. They did not talk much at first, the presence of the redcoats operating to cast a damper over their spirits, but Dick went to work and he told funny stories and was so jolly that he soon got the majority to laughing and talking; in-

deed the girls seemed to forget the fact that the redcoats were in the room, and their silvery laughter rang out and was good to hear.

The captain and his five troopers glared at the young people with angry eyes, but the most baleful glances were directed toward Dick, who often met their eyes with a glance of such cool, calm power as to force the redcoats' eyes to drop.

The captain called to Mr. Campbell, who went over to where the six stood.

"Are you the owner of this house?" the captain asked.

"I am," was the reply.

"Your name?"

"William Campbell."

"Politics?"

"I am a king's man." This was not true, but Mr. Campbell thought that a story, under the circumstances, was excusable.

"Humph!" sneeringly; "you claim to be a loyal king's man and yet stand here and permit some of the king's soldiers to be treated in this manner?"

"I cannot help it, sir. I assure you," was the reply.

Dick saw what was going on, but he did not interfere. He was willing that the British captain should talk to Mr. Campbell.

"It will do him no good," Dick said to himself.

"Why can't you help it?" the captain asked; "isn't this your house?"

"Yes, but those young people are my guests and I cannot assume to take authority over them and make them obey me."

"Well, I think you should do so."

"I could do nothing, sir; they would do as they like in spite of me."

"Perhaps so; but tell me, who is the young scoundrel who is responsible for this business? That insolent, grinning rascal who took the lead in the affair?"

"He is a stranger, sir."

"Ha! Does he not live in these parts?"

"Not that I know of. He was traveling past and stopped here, and, finding there was to be a dance, he decided to stay awhile."

"I see; a very pushing youth indeed. Did he tell you his name?"

"Yes, it is Henry Morton."

"Humph! Do you know where he is going?"

"I do not."

"Well, one thing is certain, I have a settlement to make with Mr. Morton, and I am going to make it just as soon as he gets through there if he has the courage to give me a chance."

"What will you do?"

"Challenge him to fight me!"

"I doubt his agreeing to do that."

"So do I," with an ironical smile. "He is very brave when all the advantage is on his side, but I will wager that if he were only on equal terms with an enemy—myself, for instance—he would be an arrant coward."

"I don't know regarding that, of course," said Mr. Campbell. "I hope that there will be no bloodshed here in my house, sir."

"Well, those young fellows, invited guests of yours, do not seem to be backward about the matter. They would undoubtedly shed our blood if we were to make any kind of a threatening move, so I shall not hesitate to shed blood in your house if I get a chance to do so."

"They are thoughtless," said Mr. Campbell. "I am very sorry that this has happened." Of course, he did not blame the youths, but he had to let on to the captain that he did in order to keep up the assumption that he was a loyalist.

When the young people had finished eating they got up from the table and Dick turned to Mrs. Campbell.

"You may order the servants to clear the tables and remove them now, Mrs. Campbell."

"Wait a moment," said Mr. Campbell; and then to the captain he added: "Will you sit up to the table and eat now?"

"No," was the haughty reply. "We eat at the first table or none."

"If you were real hungry you would not be so proud," said Dick.

"You young scoundrel!" the captain hissed. "Just wait till the table is cleared and removed and I shall have something to say to you!"

"Ah, indeed?" coolly; "very well; have the tables cleared, Mrs. Campbell."

The lady gave the order and the two negro women, their eyes rolling wildly with fear, cleared the tables as quickly as possible. Then a couple of big negroes carried the tables back into the kitchen.

Then Dick turned to the leader of the little party of British troopers.

"What did you wish to say to me, captain?" he asked.

"First," was the reply, "I wish to say to you, 'Give us back our weapons.'"

The youths had each taken a pistol when the tables were being cleared and they were now holding the weapons for they did not know but the redcoats might attack them.

Dick shook his head.

"We could not think of returning your weapons to you," he said, calmly.

"What's that?" angrily; "you don't mean to say that you intend keeping our weapons?"

"Yes."

"That would be robbery."

"Oh, no; we shall keep the weapons from you as a measure of self-defense."

"Ha! you are afraid to give our weapons back to us!"

"Yes—afraid that we might be forced to kill you as a result, and that is something which we have no desire to do."

"Bah! You are a coward; that is what ails you!"

"Nothing whatever ails me, sir; I am quite well, I thank you."

"You do not intend to let us have our weapons, then?"

"You have it right, sir."

"All right; then I challenge you to mortal combat, Henry Morton! You will either have to meet me or stand branded a coward before all these young people who, as can readily be seen, are at present regarding you in the light of a hero!"

"Oh!" exclaimed a number of the girls, in horrified voices; "a duel! That would be too horrible!"

"Oh, don't fight him, Mr. Morton," said Lizzie Campbell, beseechingly, "you might be killed!" Then she blushed, as she realized that she had betrayed considerable interest in the handsome young stranger.

"That's right, if you love the young cub, persuade him not to meet me," sneered the British captain. "I give you my word that I shall kill him just so surely as he agrees to meet me!"

"Bah! you are a big boaster," said Dick, contemptuously. "You could not kill anyone—save, perhaps, a ten-year-old boy—in a fair fight, man to man, and I will meet you and prove that what I have just said is the truth, you coward!"

A growl of anger escaped the lips of the captain and his face grew black with rage.

A murmur of admiration went up from the lips of the youths and maidens, though the majority of the latter were evidently very badly frightened.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTAIN'S DEFEAT.

"You insolent hound!" the captain cried, when he was able to speak coherently, his anger having almost choked him. "I will kill you for that as sure as my name is Gabriel Mordaunt!"

"You should have said, 'If I can,' " said Dick, smiling. "There is no 'if' about it. I can and will do it."

"Bah! you are good only at boasting. But now that I have agreed to meet you, what weapons shall we use and where shall the combat be held?"

"I am willing to leave the choice of weapons to you, as the challenged party."

"How about pistols?"

"They would be satisfactory to me, but where could we fight? We could not see to take aim in the darkness outside and there is not room enough in here to place us far enough apart."

"Why not use sabers?" asked Dick. "I see there is one in each of the belts taken from your men, and with sabers as the weapons we could fight here in the room."

"Oh, please don't do it!" cried Mrs. Campbell, turning pale. "I could not endure it to have blood shed on the floor!"

"There will be none shed, Mrs. Campbell," said Dick, quietly. "I will simply prove myself his master by disarming him, and will not kill, or even wound him."

The redcoats glared at the cool youth in amazement and anger.

"For downright impudence and assurance you beat anything I have ever encountered," cried the captain.

"You will find that I am the best swordsman you ever encountered," said Dick, calmly. Then he walked over to where the belts hung on the backs of chairs, drew two sabers, examined them and measured them to see that they were the same length, after which he walked back and presented one to the captain, hilt first.

"The sabers are all alike," the British captain said. "There will be no advantage for either, so far as weapons are concerned."

"True," said Dick. "Well, step to the middle of the room and we will get to work."

The captain obeyed promptly and Dick took up his position, facing the redcoat.

"Now I wish it understood before we begin," said Mordaunt, "I am not to be bound by any consideration for the wishes of the lady there. I am going to spill blood on the floor, rest assured of that! There are negro women here to scrub it up."

"I see you are bloodthirsty," said Dick.

"So I am! Nothing but your heart's blood will satisfy me!"

"Then I fear you will have to remain unsatisfied."

"There is no fear of that; I am the best swordsman in the regiment to which I belong."

"And I am the best swordsman that ever set foot on Southern soil."

The Liberty Boy spoke so coolly and calmly that the captain and his five comrades stared at him in amazement.

"Well," said the officer, presently, "if prizes were to be offered for boasters you would certainly get it."

"Oh, no; nothing of the sort. I am not boasting, simply telling the truth. But enough of this. Are you ready?"

"I am!" in a fierce voice.

"Oh, please do not fight in here!" pleaded Mrs. Campbell.

"Have no fear, Mrs. Campbell; no blood shall be spilled," said Dick. "I have given my word that the affair shall end with the disarming of the captain, and I always keep my word."

"And I give you my word that the affair shall end with the death of this insolent young scoundrel, Mrs. Campbell," said the captain. "and I always keep my word."

"When you are able to do so," added Dick, with a smile.

"I am able, never you fear!" angrily; "look out for yourself, now!"

"I am always doing that."

For answer Captain Mordaunt attacked Dick fiercely and the sabers clashed together with a loud, ringing sound, while the sparks fairly showered off the finely tempered blades.

The girls shrunk back against the wall and watched the affair with starting eyes, while their faces were as white as marble. They expected nothing else than that the handsome young stranger would soon fall to the floor a corpse, for they, naturally enough, supposed the British soldier

would be the superior of the youth in the use of the sword.

The young men were not in a much better state of mind than were the girls. They, too, feared the youth was going to be killed right there before the eyes of all.

The British troopers looked on with nonchalant smiles of confidence on their faces. They knew their captain was a good swordsman, and did not have any fear regarding the result of the combat.

But they were destined to be surprised. The young stranger quickly proved that he was the master of the sword. He handled it in a manner which showed that he was an expert and the troopers opened their eyes in amazement when they saw their captain's favorite feints foiled with seeming ease. They did not know what to think.

The captain himself was perhaps the most surprised person in the room. He was a really good swordsman, and, as he had stated, the champion of his regiment, and to find his equal here, in a seeming country youth, was more than he could endure with equanimity.

"You do know something about sword fighting," said, with a sneer; "but you are far from being my equal. I am just permitting you to defend yourself so as to make it all the harder for you when you find yourself unable longer ward off my blows."

"Oh, indeed?" said Dick, with a smile of sarcasm; "I would not have believed that you would delay killing me for even an instant longer than you found to be absolutely necessary."

The officer detected the tone of skepticism in the youth's voice and was made exceedingly angry by it. This, in addition to the knowledge that the youth was his equal with the saber, was very disconcerting and was enough to make him angry.

"I am playing with you as a cat plays with a mouse," cried.

"Indeed? Is it not strange that I cannot see it that way? Now, it really seems to me that I am able to protect myself from you, no matter how hard you may try to make me through."

This sarcastic statement increased Captain Mordaunt's anger, and he redoubled his attempts to get at the youth. In vain, he could not do it. The other's saber seemed to be always in the way, like a wall of steel.

Even the youths and maidens who had never before witnessed an affair of this kind and had no expert knowledge about such things, could see that Dick was a match for the British officer, and they were glad. They watched the combat with a great deal of interest, now that they knew this. The young man had at least an equal chance for his life, they were sure, and this took away a good deal of the horror. At first they had supposed that they would have to go there and see him practically murdered.

The captain exerted himself to such an extent as to tire him greatly, and he was becoming perceptibly weaker and slower in his movements.

Dick, on the other hand, was seemingly as strong

fresh as ever, and he proved that such was the case very quickly.

"I see you have not shot your bolt, captain," he remarked, coolly. "You have done your best, and in so doing have winded yourself. You are now tired and weak; you are at my mercy, did I choose to take your life."

This was said in a calm decided voice without the least sign of braggadocio and the captain realized that the youth's statement was true and turned pale. He was determined not to acknowledge it, however, and he cried, as defiantly as possible:

"'Tis false! I am no more tired than you are. And you could not kill me in a hundred years."

"I could kill you in less than one minute if I wished to do so; but as I have promised Mrs. Campbell that no blood shall be spilled and as I really have no desire to kill you, will, instead, do this!" And as he spoke he gave the captain's weapon a peculiar blow, knocking it out of its owner's hand.

The saber clattered on the floor, the captain stood before Dick disarmed and helpless! Dick's sword point was at his breast.

There was breathless silence for a few moments. Captain Mordaunt glared at Dick, his face pale and twitching, and then suddenly he gave utterance to a hoarse, inarticulate cry of rage and chagrin, even fear, and, darting past the youth, he dashed out of the room and out of doors.

CHAPTER VI.

AMBUSHED.

The captain's action had been entirely unexpected. Even his own men had never before seen the officer show the white feather, and they were as surprised as they were horrified.

Exclamations of delight escaped the lips of the young men and girls. Their sympathies had been with Dick and, though they had not expected to see him triumph, they were glad that he had done so.

Tom Ferroll seized Dick's hand and shook it heartily.

"I congratulate you," he said, earnestly. "I'm very, very glad you beat the boastful scoundrel," he said.

"Thank you," said Dick. "I felt confident that I could do so."

"I guess that isn't the first time you ever stood up in front of a man sword in hand."

The Liberty Boy smiled and shook his head.

"No, it isn't the first time," he acknowledged.

Lizzie Campbell approached and extended her hands, and her eyes fairly shone.

"Oh, Mr. Morton, I am so glad that you beat that British officer!" she exclaimed. "We are all glad."

"Thanks," said Dick; "I'm glad, too, but I did not expect anything other than success. Then he turned and looked at Mrs. Campbell and smilingly said:

"I kept my promise, Mrs. Campbell."

"I see you did, and I thank you for it, Mr. Morton," was the reply.

Then Dick turned to the five redcoats.

"You men may go now, if you wish," he said.

They hesitated.

"You are going to return our weapons to us?" one asked.

"Oh, no; I shall not do that."

"Why not?"

"You might wish to use them right away, and we do not wish to be bothered; we are here to-night for the purpose of enjoying ourselves."

"When will the weapons be returned to us?"

"You may come here and get them to-morrow. But remember, Mr. Campbell here has had nothing to do with this affair. He is a loyalist and does not approve of what I have done. I am to blame for it all, and when you wish to get even hunt me up."

"We won't know where to look for you."

"Well, you won't have to look; I'll bob up when you least expect it."

This was said in a matter-of-fact manner that occasioned some surprise in the minds of the redcoats, who looked at the youth searchingly.

"Well, we will go now, and we will come back here and get our weapons to-morrow," one said.

"Very well."

Then the five troopers filed out of the room and the house.

They found their captain out at the front yard fence, holding his horse, ready to mount at an instant's notice.

"Did you get our weapons?" the captain asked.

"No," replied one, and he told what Dick had said.

The officer gave utterance to an angry exclamation.

"Boys," he said, "I am going to have the life of that young scoundrel if ever he crosses my path again!"

"I wouldn't blame you for taking it," said one.

"Nor I," from another.

"But you will need to look out that he doesn't get your life, captain," said a third. "I tell you, I believe that young chap is a mighty dangerous fellow."

"There's no doubt about that," the captain agreed. "Let me tell you one thing, he is no common youth. He is a soldier, that fellow, and, of course, he is a rebel soldier."

"Do you really think so?" one asked.

"I know it. Where would you find the ordinary citizen, man or youth, who could beat me in a combat with sabers? I tell you, he is a soldier, and a rebel one. More, in all probability he is a spy!"

"A spy!" in chorus.

"Yes."

"Jove, that is possible; but who would be sending him out this way?"

"That Frenchman, Lafayette, of course."

"He is at Richmond, isn't he?"

"He was there the last we knew of him."

"Well, if this young fellow is a spy from his army, then

it would seem likely that Lafayette is figuring on coming this way, eh?"

"That would be the inference."

They talked a few minutes longer and then the captain said:

"Boys, I don't want that you shall think it was cowardice that caused me to flee after being disarmed in there a few minutes ago. I was really afraid, but I did not wish to die until after I have had a chance to settle with the young scoundrel who defeated me in the duel, and so I decided to flee and save my life till such time as I could get at the fellow."

"Oh, we know you were not afraid to die, so far as fear was concerned," said one.

"You are right; I am not afraid to die, but I did not wish to die and leave that young scoundrel triumphant. I have taken a great dislike to him, and if he remains in this part of the country, as he hinted he intends doing, then I will get him, you may be sure."

"Say, if he is a rebel spy, won't he be likely to try to follow us?" asked one.

"That is possible," said the captain, "though it wouldn't be necessary, for he probably knows our army is at Yorktown."

"Well, even if he doesn't follow us, isn't it likely that he will come over to the vicinity of Yorktown on a spying expedition?"

"Yes, that is possible."

"Then why can we not lie in wait for him along the road somewhere between here and Yorktown and make a prisoner of him?"

"That is a good suggestion; we can try it, at any rate."

Then the captain ordered his men to mount. All did so and the party of six rode away toward the east.

When they had gone about a mile they stopped and dismounted and, leading their horses in among the trees, tied them.

Then they walked back up the road fifty or sixty yards and seated themselves on the grass, with the intention of waiting and watching for the supposed rebel spy.

But the redcoats did not know Dick Slater, or they would have known that he would not be so easily fooled.

When the five troopers filed out of the house Dick said, in a low, cautious voice:

"Go on with the dancing now; I am going out to spy on those fellows and see what they say and do."

"You will be back again?" asked Lizzie Campbell.

"Oh, yes."

He went out the back way through the kitchen, and then stole around the house and toward the front yard fence. As he drew near it he heard the voices of the redcoats, and when he was at the fence he was enabled to see the redcoats and their horses.

He could hear and understand all that was said, and when the captain and the troopers mounted and rode away Dick laughed in an amused manner.

"So you are going to lie in wait for me somewhere between here and Yorktown, eh?" he said to himself; "very

good, forewarned is forearmed, and I shall endeavor to see to it that you do not get the chance to capture me."

Not wishing to leave abruptly, Dick went back into the house. He told Mr. and Mrs. Campbell that he would go as he wished to do some spying on the British yet that night.

"I will leave my horse here, however, Mr. Campbell," he added, "and I may be on hand to take breakfast with you in the morning."

"I shall look for you, Mr. Morton."

Then he addressed all the young folks and told them goodbye. "You will probably be gone home before I get back here," he said.

They crowded around him and shook hands with him and expressed the hope that they would see him again again often.

Tom Ferroll shook Dick's hand earnestly and said: "Say, if you are going into danger, to try to spy on the British at Yorktown, let me go with you. I would like to work and I have taken an intense dislike to the British on account of the way those fellows acted here to-night. I had never given the matter much thought, and really do not know whether I was inclined toward the king's cause or toward the patriotic cause, but now I know."

"What made you think I was going to spy on the British at Yorktown?" asked Dick, in a low voice.

"Why, the way you defeated the British captain open my eyes. I know, now, that you must be a soldier, like an officer in the patriot army. And I have figured it out that you are over in this part of the country for the purpose of spying on the British."

Dick smiled. "You are a pretty good reasoner," he said. "I thank you for offering to assist me, Tom, but really I prefer going alone, just at present. I may be able to find some work for you later on, but not just now."

Then Dick said goodbye to all and left the house. He went out the back way and made his way around the house and out to the road.

"Now the question is: How far will those troopers rush before stopping and taking up their positions to wait and watch for me?"

The Liberty boy remembered that Mr. Campbell had said it was about a mile and three-quarters to Yorktown, and he decided that the redcoats would go about half way and wait for him there.

"I'll walk in the road about a half or three-quarters of a mile," he said to himself, "and then I will enter the woods and make a long half-circuit."

He strode onward at a rapid pace, and as it was a bright starlight night, he had no difficulty in keeping in the road though it was so dark as to make it impossible to see more than a few yards with any distinctness.

As he walked he got to thinking of the events that had taken place back at the Campbell home; he got to thinking of Tom Ferroll and others of the young folks and of the jolly time he had had, and as he was walking at quite a rapid pace he had soon gone nearly a mile.

So immersed in the pleasant thoughts was he that

forgot for the time being where he was, and that he was likely to run into ambush.

Onward he walked, and he was still thinking of the young folks back at the Campbell home, when he was startled by hearing the sound of rushing feet and seeing several dark forms coming swiftly toward him.

This brought him back to a realization of it all in a flash.

He had run right into the ambush!

He had no time to draw a weapon; the redcoats were upon him before he could have done so.

There was only one thing to do, and that was to fight as best he could, with nature's weapons.

This he set out to do, and the way he knocked the redcoats right and left and down was a caution.

"We've got you!" cried Captain Mordaunt, in a fierce voice.

"Not yet," replied Dick, dealing the speaker a blow fair between the eyes and causing him to measure his length on the ground and be an unwilling witness of a greater display of comets and shooting stars than he had ever before seen.

CHAPTER VII.

TOM TO THE RESCUE.

Six against one is great odds, however.

There is little doubt but what Dick, with all his skill and wonderful strength and fighting abilities, would have been captured had he been left entirely to his own efforts to free himself.

But this was not to be.

There was a sudden interruption.

A dark figure came bounding upon the scene with the shout of:

"Go for them, Mr. Morton! I'll help you and we can crush them!"

The reinforcement consisted of just one person, but that changed the odds against Dick fifty per cent and made it possible for him to put up a winning battle.

"All right, I'll go for the fellows, and you do the same," cried Dick, "and we will show them how young Americans can fight."

"That we will!"

The fight was fierce now, for a few minutes. But Dick and his comrades were so quick and dealt out such hard blows that they soon had the six redcoats knocked down. Then Dick said:

"Come along with me; there is no need of staying here fighting these fellows. They are virtually thrashed."

The two darted in among the trees at the roadside and followed their way along a distance of a quarter of a mile, at last, and then they stopped.

"Say, it's you, isn't it, Tom Ferroll?" asked Dick.

It was so dark he had been unable to get anything like

a good look at his friend's face, but he was sure he had recognized the voice as belonging to Tom.

"Yes, it is I, Mr. Morton."

"How in the world did you happen to be on hand at such an opportune moment, Tom?"

"Well, I'll tell you," was the reply; "I was afraid you would get into trouble, and so I followed you. I wanted to be on hand in case you did get into trouble. I hope you are not angry, Mr. Morton?"

"Angry? Oh, no; had you not come along just when you did I guess that it would have been all up with me. They were six to my one, and would have succeeded in making a prisoner of me, I judge."

"Well, I'm glad that I was of some use."

Dick made up his mind to tell Tom who he really was. He had taken a great liking to the youth and would have staked his life that Tom was honest and true, and now that the youth had rendered him such aid Dick felt it was only right that he should make his own identity known.

So he told Tom who he really was and the youth was greatly surprised.

"Great guns! And so you are Dick Slater, the great patriot spy, are you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Tom."

"Well, I am not so very much surprised after all, Mr. Slater," Tom said. "I made up my mind when I saw you defeat the British captain that you were no common man; I decided that you were a soldier and my idea was that you were an officer in the patriot army, and I was right."

"Yes, so you were. Well, I am much obliged to you for helping me out of the difficulty into which I walked so blindly."

"You are more than welcome, Mr. Slater; I am really indebted to you for giving me a chance to render assistance to one whom I have heard a great deal about and have always admired."

"Call me Dick," said the Liberty Boy.

"All right; I shall deem it an honor to be allowed to do so."

After some further conversation Dick told Tom he might accompany him.

"We will go on in the direction of the British encampment at Yorktown," he said, "but we will have to be very careful, for those redcoats evidently suspect that I am a patriot spy, and they will doubtless hasten to Yorktown and warn the sentinels to be vigilant and keep an unusually sharp lookout."

"No doubt they will do so."

"Well, we will do some reconnoitering, anyway."

"Then you are going to let me go with you, Dick?" eagerly.

"Yes, you have earned the privilege."

"Thank you."

"None are due me; you are welcome, and have, as I just said, earned the right to go along."

They set out, and as Tom was familiar with the country in this vicinity, he was enabled to make himself of considerable use to Dick.

He acted as guide, and after half an hour of walking through the timber he brought Dick out at a point within a quarter of a mile of the edge of the British encampment.

"There is Yorktown," he said.

"Good; we will reconnoiter a bit. I judge that we will have to be careful, for it seems to me there are an unusual number of soldiers stirring for as late an hour as it now is."

"That's the way it seems to me."

It was now nearly midnight, yet a goodly number of British soldiers could be seen moving about in the faint light thrown out by the campfires.

The two stood there watching for several minutes and then Dick said:

"Let's move up a bit closer."

"All right," was the reply.

They did so, going very slowly and cautiously.

They realized that they were taking chances in doing this, but they were eager to get close enough to see what was going on.

It did not take them long to see that the British were placing out an extra row of sentinels, making two lines instead of one.

"They do not intend to give me a chance to get within the lines," whispered Dick.

"I guess you are right," was the reply.

"Well, I didn't expect to do so, anyway, so they need not have gone to the trouble they have."

"What are you going to do now?" asked Tom.

"I am going to reconnoiter and get familiar with the approaches to the British outposts and redoubts."

They moved along, going in a half-circle, until they had gone half way around the British encampment, and then, having seen all there was to be seen without entering the lines—which it would be impossible to do—Dick told Tom that they would go.

"That will be all I shall try to do to-night," he said.

"And shall we return to Mr. Campbell's now?"

"Yes."

They set out and walked at a good pace. Feeling sure that they would be safe in doing so the youths kept in the road. They were confident that the party of six British dragoons were back in Yorktown, so they would not need to fear encountering them.

When they were yet half a mile away from the Campbell home the two heard the sound of hoofbeats behind them.

They paused and listened.

"Who do you suppose it is?" asked Tom.

"It is Captain Mordaunt and a party of troopers," said Dick; "they are bound for Mr. Campbell's to get their weapons."

"Ah!"

"The officer has brought an extra number of men along in the expectation that the young men will still be there. I fear there may be trouble if the young folks are still there, Tom."

Dick's voice was sober.

"But they are not, Dick," said Tom, eagerly; "Mr. Campbell suggested that the dance break up, and the

young folks were getting ready to go home when I left to follow you."

"Good! I'm glad to hear that."

"There is nobody there but Mr. Campbell's own folks."

"That is all right; the captain will get the weapons belonging to himself and five comrades and come away again."

"You think he will not do any damage, Dick?"

"I hardly think he will do anything, Tom. You see Mr. Campbell claimed to be a king's man, and I told the British officer that I was wholly to blame for what had been done, and I don't think he will lay it up against Mr. Campbell."

The sound of the hoofbeats was close at hand now and the youths stepped in among the trees at the roadside.

Half a minute later a party of at least a dozen horsemen rode past at a gallop.

When they had passed Dick and Tom stepped out into the road and walked in the same direction.

They walked rapidly, as they wished to get to Mr. Campbell's and see what took place there.

When two hundred yards from the house they left the road and made a circuit out through the timber and came up to the house from the rear.

They heard the sound of voices around at the front of the house and, moving up close to the corner, they listened.

They recognized the voices as belonging to Mr. Campbell and the British officer.

The captain was talking somewhat threateningly to the patriot farmer.

"You claim to be a loyal king's man," said the captain, "very good. You will do well to be careful in future. You harbor any more rebel spies, as was the case to-night, then it will go hard with you."

"I did not know he was a rebel spy, sir," replied Mr. Campbell.

"Very well, I will let it go this time, but you will do well to be careful from now on."

"I shall be careful."

"See that you are."

After a little more talk the captain and his men mounted their horses and took their departure.

As soon as they were gone Dick and Tom walked around the house and confronted Mr. Campbell, who was standing in the doorway looking in the direction taken by the redcoats.

"Goodness! you gave me a start!" exclaimed Mr. Campbell. "I thought some more redcoats were here."

"No, we are more inclined to the wearing of blue coats," said Dick, with a smile.

"Did you hear the British officer talking to me?" Mr. Campbell asked.

"Yes."

"He threatened me."

"So we noticed. Well, be careful, and keep up your claim that you are a king's man; you are so near to Yorktown here that it will be necessary for you to do so in order to be safe."

"True."

"It is no sin to deceive the enemy."

"So I think, and if I can deceive them I will do so."

"That is right. Well, I will get my horse now, Mr. Campbell, and go back to Williamsburg."

"Ah, you are going back there?"

"Yes; Tom and I have been reconnoitering the British works at Yorktown and, having accomplished all that I can do for to-night, I will return."

"You really are a patriot spy, then, Mr. Morton?"

Dick understood that Mr. Campbell did not know that Tom knew who he was, and that he had said that for Tom's benefit, so he said:

"I have told Tom who I am, Mr. Campbell. He knows all, so there is no need of being careful what you say before him."

"Ah, I am glad of that. Then perhaps you will not object to my telling my wife and daughter who you are?"

"Certainly not, sir."

Then Mr. Campbell called Mrs. Campbell and Lizzie downstairs—they had not yet gone to bed—and told them who Dick was, and they shook hands with the youth and told him they were delighted to make the acquaintance of such a noted patriot.

Mr. Campbell and his wife and daughter were surprised when they learned that Lafayette and his army had advanced from Richmond to Williamsburg, but they were delighted as well, for they did not fancy being so close to the British army, and hoped that the redcoats would soon be forced to surrender.

After some further conversation Dick bade Mrs. Campbell and Lizzie goodby, Tom doing the same, and then in company with Mr. Campbell they went back to the stable and Dick's horse was bridled and saddled and led out.

Tom had already told Dick that his home was only a short distance from that of Mr. Campbell, and that he would say goodby here, so Dick shook hands with the two and, mounting, rode away in the direction of Williamsburg.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHASE.

"So you went to Yorktown and reconnoitered the enemy's position, Dick?"

"Yes, General Lafayette."

It was the morning after the night on which took place the events just narrated.

Immediately after breakfast Dick had gone to headquarters and reported, and General Lafayette had asked why the youth had not come straight back to headquarters, instead of going to the quarters occupied by the common soldiers, as he had done.

Dick told him that he did not wish to disturb him, as he had come in quite late, so had gone to the quarters occupied by the common soldiers, there being no trouble in

getting in there. Then he explained that he had gone to Yorktown and reconnoitered the British position, this statement being followed by the exclamation from General Lafayette, as given at the beginning of this chapter.

"Tell me what you learned, Dick," said the general, eagerly.

The Liberty Boy did so, the young Frenchman listening eagerly and with interest.

He asked Dick a number of questions, and after he had secured all the information Dick could impart he became plunged in thought.

"I am glad that you succeeded in reconnoitering the enemy's position, Dick," he said, presently; "it gives me some knowledge of the situation, and I will know better what to do, as I have some idea of the difficulties which lay before us in bringing about the surrender of the British after the patriot army of the North reaches here and also the French fleet."

He was silent for a few minutes thinking deeply, and then he went on:

"Dick, you have done so well in the first attempt at reconnoitering that I believe I will give you some more work to do."

"I shall be glad to do anything you wish me to, sir."

"So I thought. Well, how would you like to be assigned to the work of making written diagrams of the British works at Yorktown, showing the intrenchments, redoubts and everything, with the distances set down, so that we may have a good understanding of everything when we get ready to make an advance and lay siege to Yorktown?"

"I would like that first rate," said Dick. "In order to do that I shall have to return and be where I can see things in the daytime, so as to get the positions of the intrenchments and redoubts set down correctly and give the distances with some accuracy."

"Yes, that will be necessary."

"Very well, I shall be glad to do the work, sir."

"And while you are doing that, there is something else I would be pleased to have you do, Captain Slater."

"What is it, sir?"

"You brought me the information, Dick, that Count de Grasse was on his way here with the French fleet from the West Indies."

"So I did."

"Well, I wish you would keep a sharp lookout for the fleet and as soon as it puts in an appearance I want that you shall go aboard the count's flagship and hand him a letter which I will write."

"I shall be glad to do that, General Lafayette."

"And can you do it, Captain Slater?"

"I think so. I will hunt around and get possession of a boat the very first thing and will have it in readiness, so that as soon as the fleet appears in sight I can row out to meet it."

"That is a good idea; but I am afraid you are undertaking a hard task and a dangerous one; it is, in fact, a double task, either of which should be more than enough for one man to attend to."

"I will take all possible precautions to prevent my getting into trouble, General Lafayette. You see, in work of this kind one person is better able to work successfully than three or four, for one is not so likely to be discovered as more would be."

"That is true; but if you should be discovered and captured that would end the affair and make it unsuccessful, where if you had comrades, they might go ahead and make a success, after all."

"True, but I shall not permit myself to be captured."

"I hope not. If you should happen to be so unfortunate be sure to destroy the letter to Count de Grasse which I am going to give you. Do not, under any circumstances, permit it to fall into the hands of the British."

"I will see to it that the redcoats do not get hold of the letter, sir."

After some further conversation General Lafayette went to his room to write the letter and Dick went out to bridle and saddle Major and get ready for the trip.

He was thinking and laying his plans while getting ready, and by the time he had tied his horse in front of the headquarters building and entered to get the letter to Count de Grasse he had decided on his course of action.

He made up his mind that he would go to the home of Mr. Campbell and leave Major there; then he would see about the boat the first thing, after which he would begin the work of reconnoitering the enemy's works at Yorktown and making a diagram of them.

He was given the letter by Lafayette and then they shook hands and Dick went out, mounted his horse and rode away.

The Liberty Boy had gone about three-quarters of a mile, when, on rounding a bend in the road—which wound this way and that through the timber—he saw a man lead a horse out into the road a quarter of a mile ahead of him and mount and ride away in the same direction Dick was going.

The horseman turned his head and glanced back, and for the first time, evidently, he saw Dick. Then he urged his horse forward at a gallop.

The Liberty Boy became suspicious at once. He did not like the fellow's actions.

"I would be willing to wager a bit that that fellow is a British spy," he told himself. "Likely he has been spying on the patriot army and is starting back to Yorktown to take the news to General Cornwallis."

Dick urged Major into a gallop, and when the horseman looked again and saw that Dick was coming after him at a swift pace he urged his horse to greater speed.

This was almost equivalent to acknowledging that he was a spy, and Dick at once made up his mind to overhaul the fellow and interview him, at least, and perhaps arrest him and take him back to Williamsburg.

So he urged Major to a faster gait and the man looking back and noting this began using the spurs on his horse and whipping him with the end of the bridle reins.

Dick spoke to Major and the intelligent animal leaped forward at a terrific pace; the magnificent black was a

very speedy animal and he began lessening the distance between the two very rapidly.

The fugitive—for such he evidently was—now lashed his horse in an endeavor to make the animal show speed equal to that ridden by the pursuer, but to no avail. There were no horses in the British army of the South that were anything like the equal of Dick's horse.

Closer and closer to the fugitive drew Dick and, presently, he was within fifty yards of him. A minute passed and he was within thirty yards of the fugitive.

"Hold on!" called out Dick. "Stop! What is your hurry?"

The fugitive paid no attention to Dick. He kept going as fast as he could make his horse travel.

"Stop, I tell you!" again called Dick. "What are you running away for?"

The man looked around, a wild, hunted look on his face and called out:

"I can't hold my horse. He is running away with me."

The Liberty Boy knew this was false. He had seen the man using his whip and spur and knew the fellow was doing his best to get away.

"That is a lie, and I know it!" cried Dick. "You are trying to get away from me; why, I don't know. Stop and explain what you mean."

But the fellow would not do it. He kept on using spurs and the end of the bridle reins, and his horse was evidently doing its best.

It was no match for Dick's magnificent thoroughbred Major, however, and the Liberty Boy gained steadily on the fugitive.

Soon Dick was within fifteen yards of the man; then, ten, and he again called out to the fugitive.

"You might as well stop," he said; "don't you see you can't get away? Do you want me to shoot your horse?"

The fellow looked around, the wild, hunted look on his face, but made no reply. He kept on urging his horse forward, evidently hoping against hope that he might yet be able to make his escape.

Closer and closer Dick drew to the fugitive and he was soon almost up with him. Major's nose was at the other horse's flanks.

"Are you going to stop?" cried Dick.

The fellow made no reply.

Neither did he make any move to indicate that he had any intention of stopping.

Soon Dick was almost alongside the fellow, who, though roughly-dressed, rode like a British trooper, Dick thought.

"Stop!" cried Dick authoritatively. "You cannot go away, so why continue the flight?"

The fellow looked around, a wild glare in his eyes, and then acting on the impulse, seemingly, he drew a pistol and fired at the Liberty Boy just as Dick struck his horse, the muzzle of the pistol being within a foot of Dick's head.

The youth reeled and almost fell from the saddle, but with a wild yell of triumph the supposed British soldier

turned his horse and, dashing into the timber, quickly disappeared from view.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK AND TOM.

The bullet from the pistol did not hit Dick.

It was the smoke from the powder which, belching right into his face and eyes, had caused him to reel.

But the fugitive did not know this. Doubtless he thought he had either killed or severely wounded his pursuer.

If was also evident that he was not willing to take any chances, for he had not stopped to make sure of the result of the shot, but had taken advantage of the opportunity and had dashed into the timber and away.

It was lucky for him that he did so, for had he remained Dick would undoubtedly have captured him. The youth got the smoke out of his eyes in a few moments and then, having brought Major to a stop in the meantime, he looked undecidedly in the direction taken by the fugitive.

"Shall I follow him or not?" he asked himself. He hardly knew what to do. He felt that he owed the fellow something and he would have liked to have paid the debt, but he doubted his ability to overtake the man in the timber.

"On the open road Major is more than a match for his horse," Dick told himself, "but among the trees and underbrush Major is no better than any other animal. I guess I may as well let the fellow go."

Having so decided Dick rode onward, and three-quarters of an hour later he arrived at the Campbell home. He kept a sharp lookout as he approached the house, for he feared some redcoats might be about, and even if he were not to get mixed up in an encounter with them he would not want them to think Mr. Campbell was friendly to patriots. He did not wish to get the patriot farmer into trouble.

There seemed to be no redcoats in the vicinity, however, and Dick rode up and, dismounting, tied his horse and advanced to the door and knocked.

Lizzie Campbell appeared and she stared at Dick in an amazed manner, not seeming to recognize him, which fact astonished the youth not a little.

"Good morning, sir," said the girl, "what do you wish?"

"Don't you know me, Miss Campbell?" asked Dick, in a voice of surprise.

The girl started and looked at the youth searchingly, an eager light in her eyes.

"I believe I know your voice," she exclaimed. "You are Dick Slater, I am sure, but what in the world is the matter with your face? Are you disguised?"

"My face?" remarked Dick; "what ails it?"

"That is for you to tell me. It is all streaked and spotted with black!"

Then Dick understood it all and a hearty laugh escaped his lips.

"I know what it is now," he said. "I had an adventure back up the road. I overtook a man whom I suspect was a British spy, and when I rode up alongside him and called upon him to stop he drew a pistol and fired point blank in my face. The bullet did not hit me, as I struck his hand aside, but I got a lot of smoke in my eyes and, I judge from what you tell me, on my face as well."

"Yes, indeed; you look spotted—half white and half black, in fact. Come in and look at yourself in a mirror."

Mrs. Campbell came to the door at this moment and gave utterance to an exclamation of amazement when she saw Dick's face.

"What in the world—who is—" she exclaimed.

"It is Captain Dick Slater, mother," explained Lizzie. "He was fired at by a British spy and the muzzle of the pistol was so close to his face that he got all covered with the smoke. Goodness! wasn't it a narrow escape!"

"Yes indeed!" from Mrs. Campbell. "I would never have known you, Captain Slater, but now that I do know who you are I am very glad to see you," and she extended her hand.

The Liberty Boy shook hands with her and then with Lizzie, who now extended her hand, with the remark: "You shan't slight me, Captain Slater."

"I have no wish to do so, I assure you," was the gallant reply, and then he added: "Where is Mr. Campbell?"

"I think he is out at the stable," Mrs. Campbell said.

"Very well, I will lead my horse around there. I wish to leave the animal here awhile anyway, and I think Mr. Campbell will not object."

"Certainly not, Captain Slater."

Then Dick bowed and went back to where Major stood, untied him and led him around to the stable.

Mr. Campbell came out of the stable just as Dick came up and he started back at sight of the youth and gave utterance to a startled exclamation.

"Who are you," he cried, "and what do you want here?"

"Don't be alarmed at my smoke-begrimed face," Mr. Campbell," said Dick, laughing; "don't you know me?"

"Your voice sounds familiar, but I don't believe that I can name you, sir," eyeing Dick searchingly.

"My name is Slater—Dick Slater."

"Great guns! it is Dick Slater, sure enough!" the man exclaimed; "but I did not recognize your voice at first, and if you know how your face looks you will understand that I could not tell who you are by looking at you."

"I don't know how my face looks," with a smile; "I can only guess at it; but I should judge from what your wife and daughter said and from your own remarks and actions that I must look anything but pretty."

"Well," with an answering smile, "that is about the truth of it; but how in the world did it happen? Or are you using this decoration as a disguise?"

"Your daughter asked that question also," said Dick; "no, I received the decoration in question in a manner entirely unexpected." And then he quickly explained as he had explained to Lizzie Campbell.

"Well, that was what I would call a narrow escape, Cap-

tain Slater!" Mr. Campbell exclaimed when he had heard all.

"Yes, it was rather a narrow escape, but a miss is as good as a mile. I was almost blinded by the smoke from the pistol, however, and that gave the scoundrel who fired the shot time to make his escape."

"He must have been a desperate man."

"No doubt of that, most of these spies are," with a smile. "They are always ready to take desperate chances in order to escape."

"Well, you ought to know something about it, for I have heard you spoken of as being 'The Champion Spy of the Revolution.'"

The Liberty Boy laughed.

"Don't talk that way, Mr. Campbell," he said; "or you will make me blush, and that wouldn't go well with the smoke on my face."

The farmer laughed. "The truth should make no one blush," he said, and then he added: "I am glad to see you back again."

"Which brings me back to the business that brought me here, sir. First, I wish to ask if I may leave my horse here for awhile—perhaps two days, perhaps three or four, or even a week."

"You may leave him here as long as you like—a month, if you wish."

"Thank you; I will explain why I am here while unbridling and unsaddling my horse."

Mr. Campbell indicated the stall Major was to occupy and Dick led the horse into the stall and began unbridling and unsaddling him.

While thus engaged he told Mr. Campbell why he was there.

"Well, you have plenty of work on your hands," the man said.

"Yes," agreed Dick, "and now where will I be able to find a good boat?"

Mr. Campbell thought a few moments and then said:

"I'll tell you: Tom Ferroll has a splendid boat. It is light and easily handled and is perfectly safe in any kind of water or weather. I would not be afraid to cross the bay in it."

"Good! Tom is a strong patriot and is very friendly toward me, so I think I can get him to let me have the use of his boat."

"Yes, and he will want to go with you and help you, Captain Slater. He is full of vim and energy, that boy is, and would like to fight the British. He would make a good soldier."

"Yes, he is all right; I saw enough of him last night to enable me to know that he is brave and to be trusted."

"He is, that."

Dick had finished now and, patting Major on the neck, he said:

"Whatever you do, Mr. Campbell, don't let any redcoats steal my horse here. I would not take anything for him."

"I'll take the best possible care of him, Mr. Slater."

"And now, if you will be so kind, I would like to go to the house and wash the powder off my face."

"Come along, you are more than welcome; you will remain to dinner with us, too, won't you?"

"Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Campbell, if you are willing I shall be pleased to stay here at your house while I am in this part of the country—make it a sort of headquarters, as it were."

"I shall be proud to have you do so, Captain Slater."

"Thank you."

They went to the house and Dick washed his face, after which he spent a few minutes in conversation with the members of the family.

"Now I think I will go and see Tom Ferroll," said Dick. "Which direction shall I go to reach his home?"

"I'll go with you and show you the way, Mr. Slater," said Lizzie.

"Very well, and thank you, Miss Lizzie," said Dick.

"You will be back to take dinner with us, will you not?" asked Mr. Campbell.

"I don't know, Mr. Campbell; I won't say for certain."

"Well, come if you can."

"And you had better come right back, Lizzie, so as to help me," said her mother.

"Very well, mother."

Dick and the girl set out and walked through the timber, going in the direction of the York river.

"This is a near cut," said Lizzie; "it is not much over a quarter of a mile to Mr. Ferroll's this way, but by the road it is three-quarters of a mile."

It was a walk of but a few minutes, and they arrived at the Ferroll home.

Tom happened to be out in the back yard and saw them coming. He recognized Dick and came hastening forward.

He doffed his hat to Lizzie and said, "How do you do, Lizzie?" And then he seized Dick's hand and shook it heartily.

"Say, I'm awfully glad to see you, Dick!" he exclaimed. "I hope you are back here for the purpose of doing some kind of dangerous and desperate work and that you intend to get me to help you."

"Well, that is pretty nearly the fact, Tom," with a smile.

"Good! I'm glad of that!"

"I'll tell what I am going to do," and then Dick went ahead and explained in detail, though as briefly as possible. "Mr. Campbell told me that you have a good boat, Tom," he said in conclusion, "and so I have come over here to get the use of your boat, and, indeed, to get you to help me in this work."

"I shall be only too glad to help you, Dick," said Tom; "and I have just the boat for you. It is light and seaworthy."

"Well, I guess I had better run back home," said Lizzie. "Will you be there for dinner, Mr. Slater?"

"No, he will take dinner here with me, Lizzie," said Tom; "in fact, you will stay here with me all the time, Dick, save when we are out engaged in the work."

There was a disappointed look on Lizzie's face and Dick

noticed it, and the thought came to him that if he were to stay at the Campbell home while in this part of the country Lizzie might get to liking him, and as he already had a sweetheart up in New York State, he did not wish to bring about this state of affairs; so he quickly decided to stay at the Ferroll home with Tom and avoid the chance of such a thing happening.

"I think that, as Tom is to be my comrade and assistant in this work, it will be best that I stay here at his home," Dick said. "I did speak to Mr. Campbell about staying there, but we are nearer the river here and it will be more convenient for me to stay here, and then it will be better for you folks, Lizzie, for if the British should learn that I was there they would make it very disagreeable for you all."

"We would be willing to risk that, Mr. Slater, but of course if it will be better and more convenient for you to stay here I have nothing to say, nor will father or mother. You must come over and take dinner with us once in awhile, though."

"I will do that, with thanks, Miss Lizzie."

"Won't you go in and see the folks, Lizzie?" asked Tom.

"No, Tom; I just came along to show Mr. Slater the way and will go right back home."

Then she said goodbye to the youths and hastened away.

"Come down to the river with me and I will show you the boat," said Tom; "but wait," he added; "come in the house and make the acquaintance of father and mother first."

They went to the house and Dick was introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Ferroll, who greeted him heartily, for their son had told them some wonderful stories regarding the Liberty Boy, and how he had turned the tables on the British troopers at the Campbell home the night before.

After a few minutes of conversation Dick and Tom left the house and made their way down to the river, which was distant only about two hundred yards.

"There's my boat, Dick," said Tom, indicating a nice, well-built boat which rested in the water in a little cove formed by a bend in the shore line.

"It's a beauty," said Dick, who was a good judge of boats.

CHAPTER X.

THE FRENCH FLEET APPEARS.

Having inspected the boat the two youths sat down on the grass and entered into conversation.

"I wish to ask you a few questions, Tom," said Dick.

"Go ahead," was the reply.

"All right. Is there, anywhere near Yorktown, a hill, from the top of which it would be possible to get a good view of the British encampment, fortifications, redoubts and all that?"

"Yes, there is a hill, the top of which is not more than half a mile from the British encampment."

"On which side of the encampment is this hill?"

"It is on the east side."

"Ah, between Yorktown and the river?"

"Yes; in fact, the hill is in reality a bluff, fronting on the river."

"Good! That is just as it should be. We can watch the encampment and keep a watch out over the bay at the same time for the coming of the French fleet."

"Yes—if we venture up on top of the hill."

"You think there will be difficulty in doing this?"

"Well, don't you think the British are likely to keep watch of the hill, for fear spies will take up their position there?"

"It is possible, but even so we must manage to occupy the top of that hill, by hook or by crook."

"Well, you may count on my doing all I can to help you do it, Dick."

"I know that. Well, what do you say to going down there at once?"

"I'm willing."

"Shall we walk or go by boat?"

"I think it will be safer to walk, don't you?"

"Have we timber all the way?"

"Yes."

"Then it will be better and safer to walk. If we were to go in the boat and the British had sentinels stationed near the hill, or on it, they would see us."

"So they would."

The two at once set out.

They made their way along the shore of the York River.

Of course, they did not follow all the bends of the shore line, but their general course was parallel with that of the stream.

"How far is it to the hill, Tom?" asked Dick.

"About a mile and a half."

"That isn't much of a walk."

"No, we can do it easily in half an hour."

Twenty minutes later they came to the foot of the hill.

"Now we must be careful," said Dick.

"Yes, there may be British soldiers on guard at the top of the hill."

"You are right."

They moved slowly and surely upward.

They were perhaps fifteen minutes in reaching the top of the hill, but they felt that it was necessary to exercise every caution.

When at last they were on the top of the hill they looked all around, for they could not make up their minds that there were no British sentinels about.

They spent fifteen minutes in investigating and then came to the conclusion that there were no redcoats in the vicinity.

"I think it rather strange," said Dick.

"Yes, it would seem rather careless of the British," agreed Tom.

"Well, it is very satisfactory to us."

"So it is."

The hill was covered with a good growth of timber and Dick picked upon a large tree and climbed it.

He left Tom down below to keep watch for the coming of an enemy.

The Liberty Boy climbed well up into the top of the tree.

He was pleased when he reached the limb he had been aiming for, as from there he was enabled to get a splendid view of the British encampment.

"Jove, this is all right," he told himself. "I shall be able to make a good drawing of the British fortifications, redoubts and everything."

He spent a quarter of an hour looking keenly and searchingly at the British encampment, taking in everything in detail. Then he drew a quill, a small wooden bottle filled with ink and a piece of parchment from his pocket and began drawing a diagram of the British encampment. It was difficult to do good work under such circumstances, but he worked slowly and carefully and got everything right.

He remained up there two hours and then descended.

"What luck?" asked Tom.

"Splendid," said Dick. "I have made a complete diagram of the British encampment, showing the fortifications, redoubts and everything. It is roughly done, but I will work it over and make it smoother and neater to-night, when I won't have to work under such difficulties."

"What are you going to do now?"

"I wish we had brought a bit of something to eat with us, Tom; I would like to stay here all the afternoon and keep watch for the coming of the French fleet."

"You didn't see anything of the fleet, then?"

"No; I looked out over the bay frequently, but no fleet has come in sight as yet."

"Oh, well, it won't take us long to walk home, Dick. Let's go home and get our dinner and then come back."

"All right, but after this we will bring lunch with us every morning and stay here all day."

"Yes, we can do that."

They at once set out, and half an hour later were at Tom's home.

Dinner had been waiting nearly an hour and was cold, but the two hungry youths did not mind that. They ate heartily.

Soon after having finished their dinner they set out and returned to the top of the hill.

They spent the afternoon there, keeping watch out over the bay and in keeping watch for the British, as there was danger that some of the redcoats might come at any moment.

No redcoats put in an appearance, however, and so the youths were not disturbed.

Neither did the French fleet put in an appearance.

They remained on the hill till darkness had set in and then they returned to Tom's home. He had told his mother that it would be late when they returned and she had waited till late to begin supper. She had just finished

getting the meal when they arrived, so they ate while everything was warm.

After supper Dick spent half an hour smoothing up and fixing the diagram of the British encampment, and then he told Tom that he would go over to Mr. Campbell's, get his horse and ride to Williamsburg and deliver the diagram into General Lafayette's hands.

"You will come back, though, won't you?" asked Tom.

"Yes, I'll be back by half-past ten or eleven o'clock, and we will then have nothing to do but watch for the coming of the French fleet."

So Dick made his way over to the Campbell home. They were glad to see him, and asked eagerly if he had had any luck as yet in the work that had brought him to the region.

"Yes, indeed," he replied; "I have made a diagram of the British encampment, fortifications, redoubts and all, and when the patriot army gets here and gets ready to lay siege to Yorktown they will know just what to do and how to approach the enemy's works."

"That is good," said Mr. Campbell.

Mrs. Campbell and Lizzie said the same and complimented Dick on his success.

After a quarter of an hour spent in pleasant conversation Dick went out to the stable, bridled and saddled his horse and mounted and rode away in the direction of Williamsburg.

Three-quarters of an hour later he arrived at the patriot encampment.

He went at once to headquarters and was admitted to General Lafayette's private room.

"Well, what luck, Dick?" asked the general, eagerly. "Has the French fleet showed up yet?"

"Not yet, General Lafayette; I have succeeded, however, in getting a good look at the British encampment, and have made a diagram of the fortifications, redoubts and everything. Here it is," and he placed it on the table in front of the general.

General Lafayette opened the parchment out and examined the drawing eagerly and intently.

"This is well done, Dick," he said.

"And you may rely upon it as being correct in every particular," said Dick. "I drew that while seated on a limb of a huge tree fifty feet above the ground and on the top of a hill. I had a splendid view of the British encampment and fortifications."

"This will be of great value, Dick; I am very, very glad you were enabled to make the diagram."

"So am I, and now I will return to my station and keep up the lookout for the French fleet."

"Do so, Dick, and as soon as it appears in sight board the flagship and deliver the letter to Count de Grasse."

"I will do so, sir."

Then Dick took his departure and an hour later was back at the Campbell home, where he left Major in the stable, and then went on over to the Ferroll home.

It was half-past ten when he got there, and they went to bed at once, as the youths wished to get up early in the

morning. They were up bright and early, and after breakfast they set out for the hill. They took food along so that they would not have to return till evening.

The French fleet did not put in an appearance that day, nor the next; but the youths knew it would come sooner or later, and so they kept up the watch. On one or two occasions they were forced to leave the hill for an hour or two owing to the coming of some British soldiers, but the redcoats did not discover that patriot spies were there, and so the youths were safe in returning as soon as their enemies had taken their departure.

At last the 31st of August arrived, and with it came the long looked-for French fleet.

The youths caught sight of the sails far out across the waters of the bay, and as soon as they were convinced that there was no mistake they hastened back to the Ferroll home and, getting in Tom's boat, they rowed down the York River and out upon the bay.

The ships themselves were now visible and the youths headed toward the flagship.

They reached it at last and were permitted to come aboard.

Dick asked to see Count de Grasse. The officers and sailors who were on the deck could not understand English but they understood the name of their commander, and the youths were shown to the French admiral's cabin.

The admiral spoke English, and so they had no difficulty in making themselves understood. Dick handed the count the letter from General Lafayette, and as soon as the French commander had read the letter he shook hands with Dick and told the youth that he was glad to know him.

"General Lafayette speaks highly of you in this letter," he explained.

"I fear the general rather overestimates my abilities and value," said Dick, modestly.

"I judge not, Captain Slater," said the count. Then he excused himself, saying he wished to consult with his officers regarding the information contained in Lafayette's letter.

Half an hour later he returned and told Dick that it had been decided to send three thousand troops ashore to reinforce Lafayette and make it possible for him to keep Cornwallis from breaking through and escaping from his present position, which was in reality in the nature of a trap, once the entire patriot army was on hand and ready to besiege the place.

"Very well, it will be a simple matter to do this, sir," said Dick; "you can sail up the York River, which for twenty-five miles up is in reality an arm of the bay and is quite wide and deep. Williamsburg, the point where Lafayette's army is encamped, is only about ten miles up the stream."

"And that is Yorktown, where the British are encamped, that we are almost opposite now, Captain Slater?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good; I will order that the ships containing the

three thousand troops that I intend landing sail up the river at once."

The order was given and Dick and Tom were set aboard the ship that happened to be nearest, and with the youths to point out the course to be taken the three ships sailed away up the river.

When the vessels came opposite the point where the patriot army was encamped they lay to and the troops were set ashore. Dick and Tom accompanied them and the former acted as guide when the march to Williamsburg began.

An hour later the French troops reached the main encampment and were given a hearty welcome by Lafayette. The young French general was glad to receive the reinforcements, for he had been afraid that Cornwallis might take the alarm and break through his lines and escape. While Lafayette had only about five thousand men part of whom were militia this would have been easy of accomplishment, but now, with three thousand French veterans to aid him, Lafayette believed he would be able to checkmate any such move by Cornwallis.

It was only natural, therefore, that he should give his countrymen a warm welcome.

"I think we have Cornwallis in a trap now," he told the officers.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BATTLE ON THE BAY.

On the 5th of September Dick Slater and Tom Ferroll were again on board the flagship of the French fleet. Dick had been sent by General Lafayette with a message to Count de Grasse, and as Dick had to use Tom's boat, that youth accompanied him.

While they were in the cabin waiting for the count to read the letter a messenger entered. He was an officer from a small ship of the fleet that was used for scouting work. This ship had been out near the entrance to the Chesapeake and had put about and returned to where the fleet was stationed, the lookout having discovered a fleet approaching from the northward along the coast.

"It is the British fleet from New York without a doubt," said the count, and he at once gave the order for the fleet to weigh anchor and sail for the mouth of the bay.

Dick and Tom were greatly interested and not a little excited.

"I have been in many battles on shore," said Dick, "but never in a sea engagement, and I would be delighted to be in one."

"So would I," said Tom; "let's stay on board the ship, Dick!"

"I will ask the count to let us remain."

The Liberty Boy did so and was given permission.

This pleased the youths greatly and they went out on deck and watched the scene with interest.

The sailors on the various ships of the fleet were hard at work getting up the anchors and as soon as this had been

done the sails were set and the vessels headed away toward the entrance to the bay.

When they arrived there the ships of the British fleet were plainly visible and preparations were at once begun for a battle.

The Count de Grasse arranged his ships in a manner that would permit of good work and enable them to maneuver freely and this having been attended to the gunners got ready for work.

It was all new and interesting to Dick as well as to Tom, and they watched everything that was done with great interest.

On came the British fleet.

It was evident that there was to be a battle.

The British lost no time, but as soon as they were within range they opened fire.

The French gunners replied promptly, and in a few minutes the battle was going on at a lively rate.

The boom-boom of the cannon was heard on every hand, and every time a cannon was fired on board the ship on which Dick and Tom were they could feel the vessel shake and quiver.

It was intensely exciting and interesting and neither youth thought of being afraid. Dick, of course, was a veteran and would not have been nervous under any circumstances, but it was Tom's first experience of the roar of battle.

For two hours the battle raged and then the British fleet withdrew.

Three of the British ships had been severely injured, while none of the French ships had been damaged much. About three hundred men had been killed on the French ships. The British lost about four hundred.

"Good! good!" cried Tom, when the British were seen to be retiring; "we have whipped them! We have whipped them!"

"It looks that way," agreed Dick.

And such was in reality the case. The British had got much the worst of it.

Admiral Graves, who was in command of the British fleet, did not feel like giving up, however, and so he remained in the vicinity four days maneuvering, in an attempt to get an advantageous position and make an attack that would enable him to put the French fleet to flight.

He failed however, and at the end of the fourth day he gave the order to depart and the fleet sailed away toward the north.

It returned to New York, it may as well be said here, and the report was made to General Clinton that the French fleet was altogether too strong to be driven out of the bay.

Of course, Dick and Tom had been forced to remain with the French fleet, for it would have been too hard work for them to row clear back across the bay in the little boat. Then, too, to tell the truth, they had no desire to get back to the mainland. They wanted to see the affair between the British and French fleets through to the finish, and were glad of the opportunity to do so.

When it was certain that the British had gone Count de

Grasse ordered that his flagship and two more of the ships should return to a point opposite Yorktown. He wished to be where he could communicate with General Lafayette, so that he would know when Generals Washington and Rochambeau and the patriot army arrived from the North.

When the point where they wished to go was reached the ships anchored, and then the count wrote a letter to General Lafayette and gave it to Dick.

"Go ashore at once, Captain Slater," he said, "and deliver the letter to General Lafayette."

"Very well, sir."

Then Dick and Tom got into their boat, it was lowered to the water and they rowed away up the York River, the vessels being anchored just off the entrance to the mouth of the stream.

When they came to Tom's home they went ashore and, fastening the boat, hastened to the house.

They found Mr. and Mrs. Ferroll in an exceedingly worried state of mind. Mrs. Ferroll seized Tom in her arms and hugged and kissed him.

"Where in the world have you been so long?" asked Mr. Ferroll; "surely you have not been on the French ship all this time?"

"Yes," replied Dick; "we went with the French fleet to the entrance to the bay and were in a battle between the British and French fleets."

"Oh, Tom; you might have been killed," cried his mother, a tremor in her voice and tears in her eyes.

"Oh, I wasn't in much danger, mother," was the reply.

"No, there were only twenty men killed on the ship we were on," said Dick.

"Goodness! to think that you were on a ship that twenty people met death on!" cried Mrs. Ferroll; "you were in great danger, I should say!"

"But we did not think about it at all," smiled Dick. "We were too greatly interested in seeing what was going on. It was all new to me, too, as well as to Tom, for it was my first experience on board a ship in a battle at sea."

"Oh, you boys don't know when you are in danger," said Mr. Ferroll, smiling.

"Well, I want to tell you, sir, that in Tom, there, you have a son that you may be proud of," said Dick. "He is a soldier if ever there was one. He had never before heard the roar of cannon or witnessed a battle of any kind and he was not at all frightened but was as cool and calm as I myself was."

"Oh, come, now, don't go to talking that way, Dick," smiled Tom; "you will have me getting the big head here right away."

"I guess there is no danger of that."

Dick remained there till supper time, and then, after having eaten, he went over to the Campbell home. Tom accompanied him.

They were given a hearty welcome and had to explain what had kept them away so long.

Dick remained there an hour and then mounted Major and rode away in the direction of Williamsburg.

On reaching the encampment he went at once to headquarters and delivered the letter to General Lafayette.

Count de Grasse had written a full and detailed account of the battle with the British fleet and its defeat, and when General Lafayette had read the letter he was greatly pleased, and sent word for his staff officers to come to headquarters at once.

When he arrived he told them the good news and they were greatly pleased.

The news soon traveled throughout the camp and there was general rejoicing.

Dick was besieged by the soldiers for news of the battle, it having been learned that he was on one of the ships during the battle, and he told the story of the encounter over and over again.

Then, at last, to escape further work in that line, he went to his quarters and went to bed.

On the 7th of September the patriot force under Lafayette moved farther down the peninsula to a point where it was only a little more than five miles wide and took up its position there.

"I have fully as many men as Cornwallis has," he said, "and I believe I can keep him back if he tries to break through and escape."

CHAPTER XII.

DICK HEARS SOMETHING OF INTEREST.

Just one week later, on the 14th of September, General Washington arrived on the scene and took command of the army.

On the 18th the patriotic forces began arriving.

They came in detachments, and by the 26th the entire patriot army, 16,000 strong, was concentrated at this spot, and Cornwallis' escape was made practically impossible.

Indeed, Cornwallis did not learn of the coming of the patriot army until the 26th, when a tory spy reached his camp with the news.

He could hardly credit the man's statement that General Washington and a large patriot army had arrived on the scene.

"You must be mistaken," he said.

"I assure you that I am not mistaken," was the reply. "I have it from a responsible source that General Washington arrived in the patriot encampment some time ago, and that now there is a rebel army consisting of at least sixteen thousand men stretched across the peninsula, cutting off your escape."

"If this be true, then indeed are we in desperate straits!" said Cornwallis.

He at once called a council of war and told his officers the news. The tory spy was still in the room and he was questioned closely.

His story could not be shaken in the least. He said that

he had received the information from a relative who lived in Williamsburg, and who knew that all was true, as stated.

It was decided to send some of the best British spies and verify the story's statement before accepting it as fact, and this was done.

Late that night the spies returned with the information that the tory had told the truth, and only the truth.

"The rebels are there, nearly twenty thousand strong," one of the spies said, "and Washington is there, and Rochambeau. It looks like we are doomed."

"Is it possible that there is no escape for us?" exclaimed Cornwallis, his face pale, for now he began to realize the predicament he was in. He was already thinking of what a fall his pride would have if he was forced to surrender his army.

"That would be terrible!" he thought. "I must devise some way of escape."

But, think as hard as he might and take all the counsel possible from his staff officers no way of escape could be figured out.

It would be impossible to cross the peninsula to the south shore and get across the James River for they had no boats and the river was from two to three miles wide. It was equally impracticable to get across the York River for the same reason and then, too, the French fleet was on hand to frustrate any such attempt, even had there been boats to be had.

Clearly the only possible way to escape would be by breaking through the patriot lines and escaping toward the west, but how was this to be accomplished? Cornwallis had less than eight thousand men while the patriot army numbered sixteen thousand or more.

After giving the matter serious and prolonged thought Cornwallis decided that there was just one chance, and only one: That was that he might fortify his position and hold it till the British fleet should return from New York, strengthened sufficiently to enable it to drive the French fleet back up the bay. In case this could be done, then the British army could go on board the British ships and thus make its escape—and that was the only possible chance for it to do so.

It was a slim one, even Cornwallis had to acknowledge, but it was better than no chance at all, and he was determined to make the most of it.

To this end the work of strengthening the fortifications and redoubts was begun and was kept up steadily. If the patriot army advanced and made an attack it would find that it had a hard task ahead of it, so Cornwallis told himself.

Of course Washington, Rochambeau and Lafayette knew what was going on in the enemy's camp. They had spies at work all the time and among them was Dick Slater. News had been brought in right away to the effect that the British were strengthening their works, and were no doubt getting in shape to stand a siege.

"Well, we will begin closing in on them at once," said

General Washington, and the order was given for the patriot army to advance at once.

This was done, and when the army arrived within a mile of Yorktown it came to a stop and went into camp. From here on in the advance would have to be slow.

The diagram which Dick had made of the British encampment and fortifications, and which was in the hands of Washington and his staff, was of great benefit to them, and it made it possible for an advance to be made in safety to a point much closer than would have been possible otherwise.

The siege of Yorktown was now on and it proceeded slowly, but surely and steadily.

Washington and his staff officers were confident that they would ultimately reduce the British works and capture the army, and they were willing to take their time and proceed slowly and with caution.

Of course, with the force at their command the patriots could have carried the British works by storm at almost any time, but it would have entailed the loss of thousands of lives, and it was the plan of the patriot officers to insure as little bloodshed as possible.

All precautions were taken to prevent the escape of Cornwallis and his army. He was in a trap, and it was not intended that he should be permitted to escape.

As stated, Dick Slater had been sent ahead by Washington with a letter to General Lafayette and Dick's company of Liberty Boys had been left behind to come at their leisure. They had arrived among the first of the patriot soldiers and had been delighted to be with Dick once more.

They were now looking forward to the battle which would take place when the final attack on Yorktown should be made.

Day by day the patriot army drew closer and closer around Yorktown, encompassing the British and making their capture but a question of time.

On the 7th of September the first parallel was opened, and this proved to Cornwallis that, unless he could manage to escape, his army was doomed, either to destruction or to be captured.

Fearing that Cornwallis might attempt something desperate, General Washington kept a corps of scouts and spies busy day and night. He wished to know every move that was made by the British.

Of course, Dick Slater was one of the spies, and he did the most dangerous work of any. He was the one who ventured closest to the British encampment, and he it was who brought away the most valuable and reliable news.

On the night of the 9th Dick was close up to the fortifications of the British, doing his best to secure some information that would be of value.

It was a very dark night. It was impossible for one to see his hand before his face. There was no moon and the stars were obscured by thick clouds.

The Liberty Boy was around on the side next to the York River, and he was ensconced behind a huge tree within twenty feet of the river bank.

The campfires of the British lighted up the encampment

faintly and made it possible for Dick to see the soldiers moving about.

Dick was in reality within the British lines, he having managed to slip past the sentinels; it was so dark it was impossible for them to see him, and he was so expert in moving along without making any noise that they had not heard him.

The light from the nearest campfire reached almost to where Dick was concealed.

Presently Dick saw two men approaching the spot where he was concealed.

The men were walking slowly and were engaged in conversation.

As they drew nearer Dick was enabled to note that they were officers.

They approached to within ten feet of the youth's hiding place and paused.

"What do you think of the plan of the general?" asked one of the two.

"I hardly know," was the reply; "it may prove to be successful."

"I hardly think so; still, as we are certain to be forced to surrender if we remain here I am in for trying anything."

"If we had vessels enough to embark the whole army in and all leave at the same time we would be all right."

The Liberty Boy became greatly interested now and listened intently. What was this plan they had reference to? He suspected what it was.

"True," replied the other officer; "but we haven't the vessels; indeed, with the three little vessels at our command I fear we shall be unable to make a success."

"I fear you are right, but I wish to-night had been settled upon for the attempt. It is so dark the rebels could not have gotten an inkling of what we were doing."

"True. Well, let us hope that it will be as dark to-morrow night."

"To-morrow night!" Dick said to himself; "so they are going to make an attempt to escape on three small vessels on to-morrow night! This is news worth while securing."

"Do you think we can succeed in carrying all the men across the river in a night, even if we are not interfered with by the rebels?" asked one of the two, after a brief period of silence.

"I think so; of course it will be a big job, though."

"Yes, the river is wide and the round trip will consume considerable time."

"So it will, and we will have to be on the lookout for the French vessels, too, you know, and that will make it necessary for us to go slow."

"True. Well, General Cornwallis says he believes it to be our only hope."

"That is my belief also."

"And mine."

"Yes, the rebels have us surrounded."

"And they have an overwhelming force."

"So they have. When it comes to the finish we will be overpowered easily."

"Yes, so I hope it will not come to the finish and that we may succeed in making our escape on to-morrow night."

"I hope so."

Then the two took their departure, walking back into the heart of the encampment.

"I am much obliged, gentlemen," said Dick to himself, as he watched them walk away; "you have furnished me with some exceedingly interesting and valuable information."

CHAPTER XIII.

PLANNING TO SPOIL CORNWALLIS' SCHEME.

Dick made no haste to get away from his position.

He had secured some very valuable information and wished to carry it to General Washington, of course, but he did not wish to run the risk of being captured, so was determined to exercise great care and take no chances.

He waited perhaps fifteen minutes and then began the work of getting back through the British lines.

In doing this he would have to pass several sentinels.

This did not daunt him, however.

He had done this successfully in coming and felt confident that he could do the same in returning.

The darkness, of course, made this possible.

The darkness, too, made it more dangerous in one respect: He was likely to run upon a sentinel without knowing it, if the sentinel was standing still.

The only way to avoid doing this was by moving very slowly and cautiously.

He would have to feel his way, so to speak.

The Liberty Boy was an expert at this sort of work.

He was perfectly at home in the timber; was almost as expert as the red men of the forest.

He moved slowly and cautiously along.

Foot by foot, yard by yard, he made his way along, and every few moments he paused and listened intently.

Several times he heard the sound of footsteps and the crackling of twigs under the feet of sentinels, and by standing perfectly still until the British soldiers passed he was safe from discovery.

Onward he moved slowly and carefully.

He was almost through the British lines and had begun to congratulate himself on his success, when of a sudden he ran plump against some one.

The Liberty Boy realized that it must be a British sentinel.

It could be nobody else.

The fellow had been standing perfectly motionless, and so had not made any noise sufficient to apprise Dick of his presence.

An exclamation escaped the lips of the sentinel, and he grappled Dick.

"I've got you, you blasted spy!" he cried, triumphantly.

"Perhaps you have and perhaps you haven't," said Dick, in a calm voice.

Then a terrible struggle began.

The sentinel seemed to be confident that he could overcome the "rebel" spy.

Indeed, so confident was he that he did not call out and give the alarm at all.

Had he done so other men would have come to his assistance and Dick would no doubt have been overcome and captured.

As it was, he had a chance to make his escape, and he was the youth to make the most of the opportunity.

So long as the combat was man against man, Dick had no fears. He had never yet met the redcoat who was his master in a hand-to-hand battle.

He did not believe he would find his master in this sentinel.

He soon discovered that the fellow was very strong, however. Evidently the sentinel had confidence in his strength and believed there was no danger that the spy would be his equal in this respect.

And that was where he made a mistake.

The Liberty Boy was an exceedingly strong youth. In addition he had a grip of steel.

If he could succeed in getting the sentinel by the throat it would all be over.

Dick went to work to secure such a hold.

The sentinel had dropped his musket when he seized Dick and now the two stood there, swaying and straining every nerve.

It must have been a great surprise to the British soldier to find his opponent was fully as strong as himself.

The knowledge only seemed to make him the more determined to triumph alone and unaided, for he did not call out to his comrades.

This was very satisfactory to Dick.

It gave him all the chance in the world, and he was determined to improve it.

He worked away on the defensive until he was sure he could succeed, and then he suddenly let go of the sentinel's right arm with his left hand and seized the fellow by the throat.

A gasping cry escaped the lips of the sentinel as he felt the steel-like fingers closing on his throat.

He realized now, for the first time, that he was in danger, and at the last moment he had tried to call out to his comrades.

The call died away on his lips in a gasp, however, and Dick did not believe it had been loud enough to be heard by any of the sentinels in the vicinity.

He did not feel like remaining where he was any longer than could be helped, however, and so he squeezed the throat of the redcoat with all his might, determined to render him unconscious as quickly as possible.

He was not long in accomplishing his purpose.

Presently the man's form became limp and hung a dead weight in Dick's hands.

Then Dick knew the fellow was insensible and, easing the form noiselessly to the ground, he stole away through the timber in the direction of the patriot encampment.

He was soon through the British lines.

Then he walked rapidly, and a few minutes later he was standing in front of the tent occupied by General Washington.

The orderly stood there and Dick asked if the commander-in-chief was in.

"He is," was the reply.

"I wish to see him, then, at once; I have important information for him," said Dick.

"I will see if he will receive you," and the orderly turned to enter the tent.

"Is that you, Dick?" called out General Washington's voice from within the tent.

"Yes, your excellency," replied Dick.

"Bring him right in, orderly," ordered Washington.

"Come on in," invited the orderly, and he held the tent-flap back while Dick entered.

The commander-in-chief sat at a small portable desk, on which was a candle, and he was looking at some documents, but turned and faced Dick as the youth entered.

"Ah, Dick, glad to see you," he said; "be seated," and he nodded toward a camp stool.

The Liberty Boy sat down.

"I believe you told the orderly that you had important information for me, Dick?"

"Yes, your excellency; I have just come from within the British lines."

"Ah!"

"While there I overheard a conversation between two British officers."

"You are a wonderful youth, Dick! But what did the officers have to say?" There was subdued eagerness in the great man's tones.

"They were talking about a plan which Cornwallis has conceived to enable his army to make its escape, sir."

"Ha! say you so, Dick? Has the British commander indeed a plan? What can it be?"

"I will tell you, sir: According to the words of the officers there is a plan on foot for the entire British army to slip away to-morrow night on board three vessels which the British have in some way got the use of."

"So that is the scheme, is it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, well! It is indeed a daring and desperate one, for doubtless the vessels are small ones, and it would take the army the whole night to get away."

"Undoubtedly, sir."

"Well, we must checkmate that move," said the commander-in-chief, grimly; "I cannot permit Cornwallis to escape me now."

"It would be bad, indeed."

"Yes, fortunately we have the means to enable us to checkmate the move in question; all that will be necessary will be to get word to the French fleet and have some of the warships stand in close to the shore and thus they will be in a position to intercept the vessels that come for the purpose of taking the British army off."

"True, sir."

"I suppose there is no danger that the attempt may be made to-night, Dick?"

"I think not, sir; and then Dick detailed the conversation he had overheard and the commander-in-chief nodded when Dick had finished and said:

"No, there is no danger, I am sure, but to make sure of it you had better return and keep a close watch on the enemy. It is possible that the fact that one of the sentinel was choked into insensibility by some one may arouse the suspicions of the British officers and make them think that their plans may have been discovered, in which event they might try to take time by the forelock and escape to-night."

"I will go at once, sir, and if I see anything suspicious going on in the encampment I will return with the information at once."

"Very good, Dick."

Then Dick saluted and withdrew and made his way back toward the British encampment.

He did not try to get through the lines this time, as he knew it would be extremely dangerous to do so, for the sentinel had surely been found before this, and doubtless a sharp lookout would be kept during the rest of the night, which would make it almost an impossibility to penetrate to the point he had reached before.

It was not necessary that he should re-enter the British lines, however. He was there only for the purpose of detecting any move that might be made by the army, tending to a general attempt at escaping, and such a movement could be detected from a point outside the British lines.

So Dick took up his position and settled down to take it easy and watch the enemy.

This he kept up till perhaps one o'clock in the morning, and then, feeling sure that no such attempt as was to be made the following night would be made on this night, he went back to camp and, routing out Bob Estabrook and sending him to keep watch till morning, he lay down and went to sleep.

When Bob Estabrook appeared in camp next morning he reported that everything had been quiet in the British encampment during the night.

After breakfast Dick went to General Washington's tent and reported that the British had made no move toward trying to make their escape during the night.

"They will make the attempt to-night, then," said Washington. "Well, I shall send word to Count de Grasse and he will have half a dozen ships of war lying just off the shore here opposite the British encampment, and when the vessels put in an appearance—the three that are to be used by the British—they will be captured."

Dick was selected to carry the message to the French flagship, and he went aboard about the middle of the forenoon and handed the letter to Count de Grasse.

The count read the letter and then wrote one in reply and gave it to Dick, who at once got in the boat and rowed back to the patriot encampment.

He delivered the letter to General Washington, who read it and nodded his head.

"Good," he murmured; "the count says he will attend to the matter and that the three vessels will be captured."

"That will certainly put an end to any further attempts at escape on the part of the British, don't you think, your excellency?" remarked Dick.

"I am quite sure that it will, Dick."

The officers of the commander-in-chief's staff were called together and told what had been done and what was to be done, and they expressed extreme gratification at the outlook.

"The capture of the vessels to-night will prove to Cornwallis that his situation is hopeless," said General Rochambeau.

The others said the same.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE END OF THE SIEGE.

That night the three vessels were captured by the French warships, and when Cornwallis learned of it he was in despair.

He called his officers together and a council was held.

"We have just one chance left," said the British general; "one chance, and one only—and I must admit that I consider it to be only a slim one."

"What is it?" asked one of the officers.

"It is that we may be able to hold out till Graves returns from New York with a strong enough fleet to drive the French fleet away; this done we could embark on the warships and make our escape."

"But that is indeed a slim chance," said another.

"Yes, so it is," the general agreed, "but it is all that remains to us. But how do you suppose the rebels learned that we were going to try to escape on board the vessels to-night?"

"That is hard to say," replied one.

"It is a mystery," declared Cornwallis.

"Perhaps the capture of the vessels was due to a lucky—for the rebels—accident," said another.

"That is possible."

The capture of the three vessels caused General Washington and the members of his staff great satisfaction.

It put to an end all danger that the British might succeed in escaping.

Their capitulation could now be only a matter of time.

On the 11th of October the second parallel was opened and the British began to look forward to a desperate and final engagement.

There were still the outer and inner redoubts to be taken before the patriots could fall upon the British, however, and this was to be the next thing attempted.

On the 14th it was decided to storm the outer redoubt, and arrangements were made to do so.

The patriot forces were placed in the proper positions and then the engagement began.

Dick Slater and his Liberty Boys were in the front ranks, and they did splendid work, for they were dead shots and seldom fired a volley without bringing down a number of the enemy.

Generals Washington and Lafayette were close at hand, mounted on their horses, and were superintending the work of the forces with as much coolness as though there were no bullets whistling about in their vicinity.

The volleys of the Liberty Boys did the most damage to the defenders of the redoubt, and Washington noted this fact and encouraged Dick to keep his boys at work.

The youth did so, but at last there came a period when the youths did not fire for nearly a minute.

"What is the matter, Captain Slater?" asked the commander-in-chief.

"We are out of ammunition, your excellency," said Dick.

"Then charge on the redoubt," said General Washington, grimly.

"Charge bayonets!" cried Dick. The Liberty Boys dashed forward with a cheer.

It was a charge, indeed.

The Liberty Boys were absolutely fearless, and as they rushed upon the defenders of the redoubt they gave utterance to cheer after cheer.

"Down with the king! Long live liberty!" was the cry, and the fierceness of the bayonet charge was such that the Liberty Boys dashed over and into the redoubt and were among the redcoats almost in a twinkling, bayoneting them to death.

A goodly force of the regular soldiers followed the Liberty Boys, and when the British defenders of the redoubt saw the reinforcements coming over the works they turned and fled at the top of their speed.

The redoubt had been captured almost in a twinkling.

There was still another redoubt near at hand and Dick sent one of the Liberty Boys to General Washington to ask permission to charge it.

"Tell Captain Slater that he has my permission to do so," said General Washington, "but I would not order him to do it, for it will be a desperate affair, I am afraid."

The Liberty Boys hastened back to Dick with the information, and the next minute the youths were charging toward the other redoubt, cheering like mad.

After them came a large force of regular soldiers, old veterans who were determined that a party of youths should not outdo them, and they uttered wild yells as they went, also.

It was too much for the British, and after discharging one wild volley they deserted the redoubt and retreated pell mell to the main works.

One minute later the American flag floated from the second redoubt, and only the main works of the British remained to be stormed.

Generals Washington, Rochambeau and Lafayette were delighted. They believed that the end was not far off.

"Cornwallis will be forced to surrender within a very few days," said Washington.

The others said the same.

As for Cornwallis, he and the members of his staff were at that moment holding a council of war.

The capture of the two redoubts filled them with alarm. They saw that things were fast coming to a head.

"Unless Graves comes with a strong fleet and drives the French ships away and takes us off, and that very soon, we shall be forced to surrender," said Cornwallis.

"Yes, we cannot cope with a force more than double our own in numbers," said an officer.

The firing from the patriots' cannons and from the cannons on board the French ships was kept up steadily throughout the day and also all through the next day, the 15th.

Being driven almost to desperation, the British made a desperate attempt to break through the patriot lines and escape that night, but to no avail. They were driven back with considerable loss and retired within their works, feeling that their case was hopeless.

They realized that they could not escape.

But they would hold out as long as possible, hoping against hope that Admiral Graves might appear with a strong British fleet and save them at the last moment.

On the 16th the bombardment of the British works, both from the cannon on shore and those on the French ships, was so severe that the works began crumbling to pieces.

When the sun went down that evening it was plain to all that another day would certainly end it. Breaches had been made sufficient to admit large forces of patriot soldiers, and the British realized that on the morrow they would be attacked in earnest.

It was indeed a serious council of war that was held that night by General Cornwallis and the members of his staff.

The matter was discussed in all its bearings, and at last it was decided that, if Admiral Graves did not show up by morning, they would surrender.

Early next morning the patriot batteries opened fire again and the French cannoneers began work also from the warships, and the bombardment had scarcely more than gotten fairly under way before a white flag went up on the wall of the British works.

"The British have surrendered! The British have surrendered!" was the cry from thousands of patriot throats, and there was general rejoicing.

General Washington sent a messenger to meet the messenger sent by General Cornwallis, and it happened that Dick was selected.

"Well," said Dick, when the two met and saluted, "your commander has surrendered, I see."

"Yes," was the reply.

"Very good; what is wanted now?"

"General Cornwallis sends his compliments and asks that he and his officers and General Washington and his staff meet and arrange the terms of surrender."

"Very well," said Dick; "I will see what the commander-in-chief has to say about that."

He hastened back and told the commander-in-chief what the messenger had said, and General Washington told Dick to return and say that the request would be granted.

The members of the two staffs met and the two commanders held a long conversation, at the end of which Cornwallis surrendered, his soldiers becoming prisoners of war, subject to the usual rules of exchange.

One reservation was asked by Cornwallis and was granted by Washington, and that was that the loyalists in his army should be permitted to take their departure, and Washington permitted these to go aboard the three vessels that had been captured. Then the vessels sailed for New York.

It was indeed a great day for the patriots when the British marched out and laid down their arms.

Among those who were greatly pleased on account of the surrender of the British were the Liberty Boys.

Tom Ferroll had remained with Dick during the whole of the time the siege of Yorktown was in progress, and he had fought bravely and well.

And now, the affair being ended, he insisted that Dick go home with him for a visit.

"We will have all the young folks of the neighborhood in," he said, "and will have a dance that will last all night."

"May I bring my company of Liberty Boys along?" asked Dick.

"Certainly," was the reply.

"All right, then; we will go home with you, Tom."

Dick went to General Washington and got permission to go, and the commander-in-chief told him that he and his Liberty Boys might take their time about returning to the North and report there when they got ready.

This suited Dick, and he and the Liberty Boys went to the home of the Ferrolls. They remained two days and on the night that came between the two days a big dance was held. It lasted all night, and as there were nearly two score girls present, all the Liberty Boys got to dance as much as they cared to.

The youths rested that day and slept all night, and next morning they set out for the North, followed by the good wishes of all the young people in that part of the country.

Two years later Dick heard that Tom Ferroll and Lizzie Campbell were married.

"I'm glad to hear it," he said to himself, "for she is a splendid girl and Tom is a fine fellow."

THE END.

The next number (134) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS AND PAUL JONES; OR, THE MARTYRS OF THE PRISON-SHIPS," by Harry Moore.

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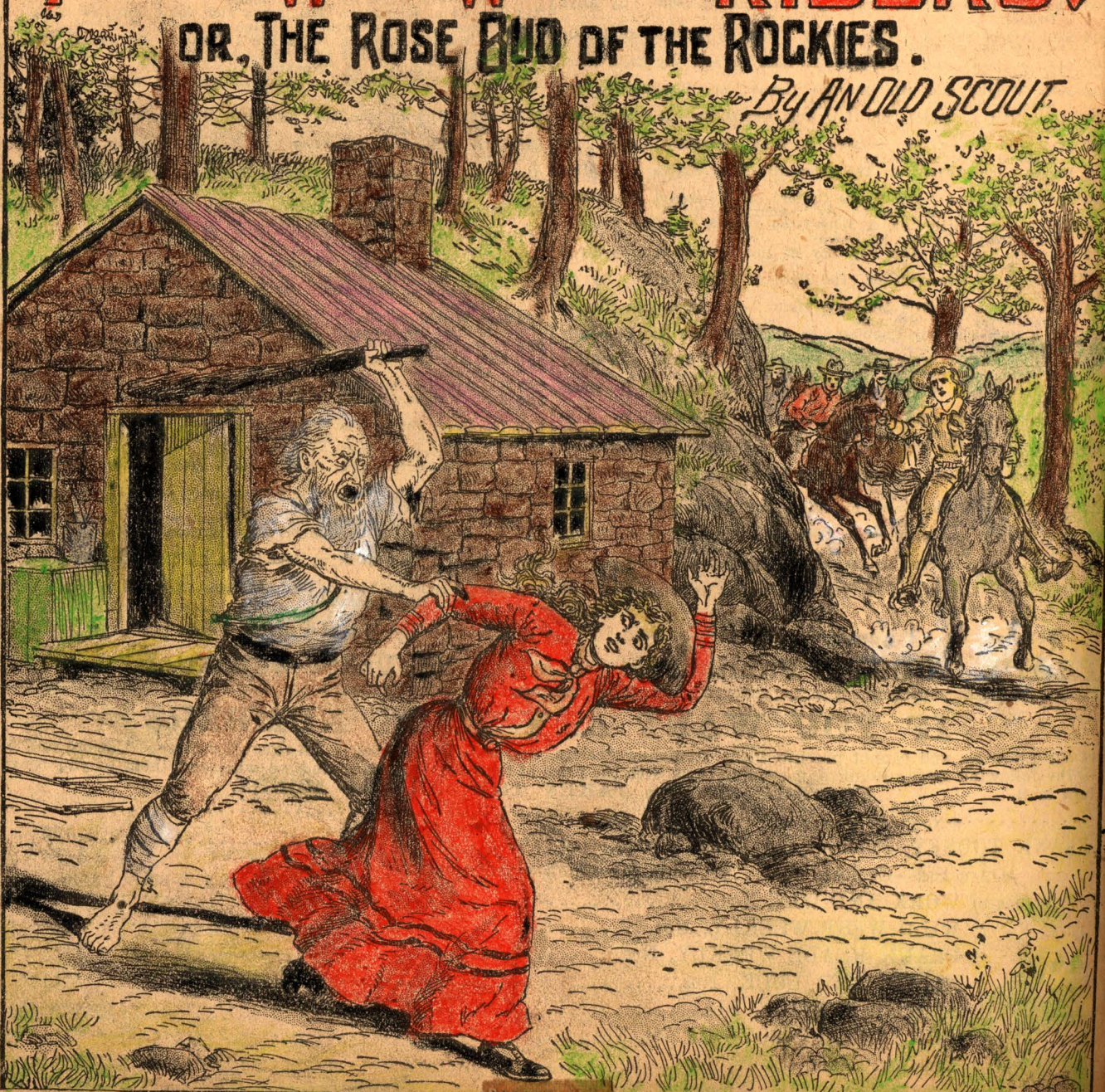
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.... " " THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76, Nos.....
.... " " Ten-Cent Hand Books, Nos.....

Name.....Street and No.....Town.....State.....